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WSIS+20 FORUM
HIGH-LEVEL EVENT 2024

27-31 May 2024
Geneva, Switzerland

High-Level Outcomes and Executive Brief

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WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024: High-Level Outcomes and Executive Brief

Introduction

At the WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024, moderated Leaders TalkX took place on the 27th and 28th of May. These 14 sessions, moderated by High-Level Track facilitators nominated and identified by WSIS stakeholders, gathered High-ranking officials of the WSIS Stakeholder community, representing the Government, Private Sector, Civil Society, Academia, and International Organizations.

A list of High-Level Participants is available: https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/HighLevel

WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2024: Chair

H.E. Mr. Albert Rösti
Federal Councillor
Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC)
Switzerland (Confederation of)

Moderation: High-level Track Facilitators (HLTFs)

All the Leaders TalkX sessions were moderated by High-level Track Facilitators nominated by the different stakeholder types, i.e. Civil Society, Academia, Private Sector and Technical Community.

Session	Photo	Name	Title	Organization
Forging Partnerships: Shaping the "Digital for Development" landscape https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/372		Ms. Karen McCabe	Senior Director, Public Affairs & Marketing	IEEE
The Connectivity Imperative: Laying the Foundation for Inclusive Information Access https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/376		Prof. Francois Grey	Associate Professor & Dean of Studies, Geneva School of Economics & Management	University of Geneva
Gateway to Knowledge: Empowering Global Access Through Digital https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/378		Ms. Lori Schulman	Senior Director, Internet Policy	International Trademark Association (INTA)
Bridging the Skills Gap: Building Capacity for the Digital Age https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/462		Dr. Konstantinos Komaitis	Resident Senior Fellow, Global and Democratic Governance, DFRLab	The Atlantic Council

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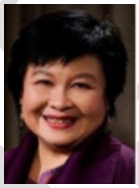
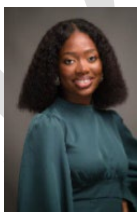
Securing the Digital Realm: Collaborative Strategies for Trust and Resilience https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/473		Ms. Moira Whelan	Director, Democracy and Technology	National Democratic Institute
When Policy Meets Progress: Shaping a Fit for Future Digital World https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/497		Ms. Timea Suto	Global Digital Policy Lead	International Chamber of Commerce – ICC
ICT Applications Unlocking the Full Potential of Digital Part I https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/472		Mr. Syed Mohammad Shaharyar Jawaid	Senior ICT Specialist, Economic Infrastructure	Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)
Click to Govern: inclusive and efficient e-services https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/470		Ms. Mei Lin Fung	Chair and Co-Founder	People Centered Internet
Digital advancing Sustainable Development: a trusted connected world https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/507		Prof. Tim Unwin	Emeritus Prof of Geography Chairholder of UNESCO Chair, ICT4D	Royal Holloway University of London

ICT Applications Unlocking the Full Potential of Digital Part II https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/511		Ms. Dana Ramadan	Senior Analyst	Access Partnership
Looking Ahead: Emerging Tech for Building Sustainable Futures https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/515		Dr. Liberato Bautista	President	Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO)
Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/498		Ms. Jennifer Chung	Director of Corporate Knowledge	DotAsia Organisation
Partnership Pivot: innovating international cooperation to scale digital inclusion https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/502		Ms. Helen Harris	Public Policy Manager	Amazon
Local Voices, Global Echoes: Preserving Human Legacy, Linguistic Identity and Local Content in a Digital World https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/504		Ms. Daniella Esi Darlington	ITU Youth Advisory Board member, Co-founder & Chief Operating Officer	Copianto AI

H.E. Mr. Albert Rösti
Federal Councillor
Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC)
Switzerland (Confederation of)

Chair's Summary

From 27 to 31 May 2024, the WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024 was held in Geneva, Switzerland, together with the AI for Good Global Summit 2024, including the UN's first AI Governance Day held on 29 May. It addressed our digital present and future by reflecting on the impact of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS), which took place twenty years ago in two phases in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005). During this week more than 8000 participants[1] from 160 countries attended both events with thousands more joining online.

The High-Level Event 2024 was co-hosted by the Swiss Confederation and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and co-organized by ITU, UNESCO, UNDP and UNCTAD. It was chaired by the Swiss Confederation, represented by Federal Councillor Albert Rösti, Head of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC).

Anniversaries are moments for celebration but also critical reflection. Open and realistic reflections are crucial for ensuring the continuing relevance of WSIS in the coming years of profound changes driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other new and emerging technologies. Not surprisingly, therefore, the underlying question this week has been if the "WSIS glass" is half full or half empty.

The High-Level Event 2024 covered a broad spectrum of topics, including cybersecurity and trust, artificial intelligence, emerging technologies, meaningful access to infrastructure as well as content, and the digital divides. You can find enclosed the main points distilled from nearly 200 sessions, including fourteen high-level talks and a Ministerial Roundtable, summarizing the discussions as objectively as possible from the Chair's perspective.

[1] 6000 physical and 2,000 remote; 500 High-Levels, including CEOs, Ministers, Heads of Organizations, Ambassadors, etc.; Gender Participation 58% male, 41% female.

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Sustaining digital growth

Throughout the week, there were many references to the fast digital growth we have experienced over the last two decades: In 2005, when WSIS concluded, there were 972 million people online. According to the ITU, there are now approximately 67 per cent of the world's population, or 5.4 billion people, connected. However, it is estimated that 2.6 billion people still remain offline[2].The 17-fold growth of the number of internet users between 2005 and 2024 has been spectacular. Yet, digital divides are still a reality. The digital growth must be sustained and accelerated in the coming years, if we are to realise the aim of connecting all humanity. A diverse digital growth and inclusion speed can widen existing digital and societal gaps. Digital for the benefit of all remains the main goal of the WSIS processes[3] and their contribution to the realisation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Cultural and linguistic diversity

Diversity, for example in language and culture, echoed in a wide range of contexts during the High-Level Event 2024. With ICTs being an enabler in all sectors of society, WSIS processes and structures offer a robust mechanism to address digitalisation across a spectrum of socio-economic issues. The digital policy landscape has become much more diverse and inclusive over the years and the UN Internet Governance Forum (IGF) as well as the annual WSIS Forum continue to offer complementary global multistakeholder platforms to discuss these matters in a holistic manner.

Twenty years ago, WSIS emphasised the importance of multilingualism and cultural diversity in the then-emerging information society. Over the years, efforts have been made to support local content creation, preserve cultural heritage online, and provide multilingual content to address digital content disparities. Moving forward, AI and digital developments should be more supportive of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032), as declared by the UN General Assembly.

WSIS implementation activities have also proven their worth in driving digital transformation in the cultural sector. There is a recognition and call for action within the WSIS community that much more must be done to foster 'digital diversity', especially in the AI era, where diversity of data and knowledge inputs will be critical for dealing with biases and adjusting AI platforms to local and cultural specificities, in particular where only limited data is available in digital form.

Infrastructure and standardisation

Since WSIS 2003–2005, ICT development has been central to the global digital conversation. The fast digital growth brought more users and more services online and made digital infrastructures part of critical infrastructures at national and international levels. The vulnerability of digital infrastructure is the vulnerability of modern society. For example, disruptions of submarine cables could leave countries in communication darkness. The expansion of satellites created a new infrastructural layer with many governance and policy issues. Advancements in mobile connectivity (e.g. around 5G and the upcoming 6G) and the fast growth of the Internet of Things sector have also raised issues of resilience, security, but also availability and accessibility.

As critical shapers of infrastructure and the overall digital realm, technical standards have constantly increased in importance. Policy communities have been focusing on nontechnical aspects of standardisation, including the impact of standards on human rights, ecommerce, and cybersecurity. The WSIS processes

[2] ITU report "Measuring digital development: Faces and Figures 2023". Available at https://www.itu.int/itud/reports/statistics/facts-figures-2023/

[3] In this summary, the term 'WSIS' is used to refer to the whole architecture that has been set up to follow-up and implement the results of the Summits, including the UN Internet Governance Forum, the WSIS Forum, which grew out of WSIS Action Lines facilitators' meetings, and the overall UN system-wide follow-up by the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development and all other processes that work on implementing the WSIS consensus.

should play a critical role as the future interfaces between technical standardisation and broader digital policy dynamics.

Inclusion

WSIS increased awareness that inclusion is much more than simple access to infrastructure. Digital technologies and services must be affordable and meaningful by providing users with digital tools to advance their well-being and prosperity as well as to exercise their fundamental rights. A holistic approach to inclusion underpins WSIS Action Lines from education to issues like health and other key areas of everyday life.

AI has brought new aspects to the discussion on digital inclusion. By not being included in the training of AI models, the cultural and societal heritage of peoples and communities can be excluded from global knowledge codified by AI. WSIS mechanisms should continue addressing the impact of emerging technologies on inclusion in the digital realm.

Economy and labour

E-commerce is an engine of digital growth. WSIS mechanisms have brought together actors who discuss economic and trade issues in the wider digital policy context of human rights, security, and data governance. Labour issues acquired additional importance with the uptake of the platform economy and the challenges brought by AI and automation for the world of work. Moving forward, WSIS processes could benefit from placing higher emphasis on labour issues in the economic context and in relation to other digital policy issues.

Digital technology and sustainable development

In 2003-2005, WSIS key outcomes were drafted in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) shaped a new societal context for digital growth. Although there is no specific SDG on digital matters, digital technologies have a cross-cutting dimension: they can serve as an enabler for achieving all SDGs, effectively becoming (as they are sometimes called) the 'invisible,18th SDG'. Over the years, we have seen digital technologies used in areas such as sustainable agriculture, accessible healthcare systems, education, and more.

The relevance of digital technologies will continue to increase with the pressure to accelerate progress in implementing SDGs. The interplay between digital and the environment remains of particular importance: while relying on technology to accelerate development and growth, the world also needs more concerted and consistent efforts to protect the environment meaningfully and sustainably for current and future generations. Using the Geneva Plan of Action and its action lines framework, the WSIS community has mapped[4] and continuously strengthened the linkages between WSIS and SDG processes in fostering faster progress towards addressing global challenges and ensuring a more inclusive, sustainable, and equitable digital society and economy.

Media and content

Since WSIS 2003-2005, the media ecosystem and the public sphere have drastically changed. Social media platforms have significantly reduced the cost of content production and dissemination, facilitating diverse

[4] In 2015, a WSIS and SDG Matrix was developed by the UN agencies involved to highlight the importance of WSIS Action Lines in accelerating the achievement of the SDGs. Available at https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/sdg

voices, perspectives, and local content that contribute to more inclusive and diverse digital spaces. This has reduced the "definition power" of legacy media on the public discussion. At the same time, the scaling effects of platformisation have not only allowed a few companies to become big economic powers, but have also enabled the emergence of new gatekeepers for information dissemination and media consumption. The reduction of editorial responsibility and the laws of the so-called "attention economy" have facilitated the spread of extremist voices and hate speech as well as the distribution of mis- and disinformation. The evolution of the debates about media and content in the IGF and WSIS Forum over the years clearly reflect these developments.

With the increasing use of AI and data in the creation and dissemination of content and information, new issues have emerged that require dialogue but also decisions. The notions of information integrity and trustworthy content have become key issues, in particular in a year with important elections in many parts of the world. New governance models need to be found not only for platforms and AI-driven services, but also in traditional fields such as copyright verifiability and protection of sources of information.

Knowledge, information, and data

The terminological trinity of digital content - data, information and knowledge - has changed substantially since 2005. In the Tunis Agenda, information was referred to 12 times and knowledge 9 times. Data was not mentioned at all in 2003 and 2005, but it dominates the digital policy language today. AI-driven services use data as well as information and knowledge from books, videos and other forms of content to create new content in ways that are often not transparent. Therefore, WSIS mechanisms should revitalise the relevance of the concepts of data, information and knowledge to ensure transparent, fair, and inclusive AI developments.

The concept of digital public goods (DPGs) is central for managing data, information, and knowledge and accelerating realisation of SDGs.

Artificial intelligence

Generative AI (genAI) tools have accelerated the focus on AI within national, regional, and international digital governance processes. AI, however, is more than just genAI, and work on the broader policy implications of this technology has been ongoing for several years now, by a number of the UN agencies, under coordination of such mechanisms as the UN Interagency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence (IAWG-AI), and standards-setting bodies, especially under the umbrella of the World Standards Cooperation (WSC).

AI, if harnessed responsibly and in an inclusive manner, can contribute to the achievement of all 17 SDGs. This was demonstrated through a wide range of use cases over the week at the WSIS Forum and also at the AI for Good Global Summit.

In this regard, AI governance discussions have recently been centred around the management of risks, from long-term ones to immediate risks related to divides and inequalities, jobs, teaching, and market monopolies (among others).

The echoing point from the past week is that there is no lack of AI governance initiatives at the regional and international levels but there should be a continued emphasis on inclusiveness, multistakeholderism and UN core values.

The exchanges at the High-Level Event 2024 and at the AI Governance Day, organised on May 29 in conjunction with the AI for Good Global Summit, which was held in parallel, have shown that discussions on the governance of AI – often framed as something 'new' – are omnipresent in all WSIS processes.

This week's gatherings in Geneva have shown that experts from UN specialised agencies are working in their fields of competence to use the potential and minimise the risks of AI in order to achieve the 17 SDGs.

The AI for Good platform - which includes the annual AI for Good Global Summit, held since 2017 – is organized by ITU with more than 40 UN partners. The latest edition of the UN Activities Report, released at the 2024 Summit, comprehensively highlights more than 400 UN use cases on AI. Many of these are the product of collaboration among UN agencies. This is key to understanding our collective toolkit and keep building on our successes.

It also has become clear and visible that all relevant international organisations mandated with technical standardisation already cooperate not only among each other, but together with experts in the field of social and economic development, human rights and inclusion so that new technologies like AI are not merely seen as technical issues, but that technology is part of all digital policies.

Moving forward, a useful approach would be to relate governance approaches to the functions they should perform, including maximizing benefits by dealing with AI risks, protecting data, and reducing the misuse of AI. And we should find ways to ensure that AI governance debates and mechanisms are more prominently anchored in the SDGs and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, for instance through placing more focus on issues of capacity building and empowering communities and groups around the world to truly leverage AI for their own development. AI should reflect cultural, linguistic, and societal traditions, especially of developing countries that do not currently have enough capacity to develop AI models based on their data and knowledge.

Human Rights and ethical considerations

Human rights based and ethical conduct and decision-making have become top priorities as technology becomes more pervasive. Building on the WSIS call (through a dedicated Action Line) for consideration to be given to the ethical dimension of the information society, ethical and human rights-based guidelines and principles have been or are being put in place for the development and use of emerging and advanced digital technologies, including AI.

UN agencies, such as OHCHR and UNESCO, have developed ethical and human rights frameworks for AI and advanced global dialogues in this regard, whereas dialogue platforms like the IGF and the WSIS Forum have enabled multistakeholder and multidisciplinary discussions on the ethical implications of digital technologies. A more careful reflection on the interplay between AI and other fast-advancing fields such as neurotechnology – and the implications of this interplay for human autonomy, dignity, and other core values – is worth pursuing with a stronger sense of urgency.

Trust and security in the digital space

WSIS documents described confidence, trust and security as key pillars of the information society, and subsequent mechanisms and discussions have addressed various related issues, from information and network security to cybercrime, spam, and child safety online. In addition, WSIS implementation activities have contributed to building and strengthening capacities at a national and regional level to tackle various types of cyber risks. The role of regulators in digital-related sectors should be further strengthened.

Cybersecurity has been also mainstreamed into existing peace and security policy frameworks within the UN System. WSIS mechanisms through WSIS Action Line C5 (Building confidence in the use of ICTs) facilitated by ITU can foster exchanges within the UN System and between them and other spaces in which issues of an interdependent nature are tackled (e.g. data protection, human rights, standardisation).

Capacity development

WSIS mechanisms have helped many countries to develop their capacities to address digital policy issues. Government officials, businesspeople, engineers and civil society activists participated in a wide range of

ambassadorship and fellowship programmes provided by the United Nations, Member States, and various organisations within the digital governance ecosystem.

The development of digital skills is a collective responsibility involving governments, industry, educational institutions, international organisations, and donor agencies.

While individual capacity development and training has considerably evolved in the WSIS processes, there is a major gap in institutional capacity development, which is critical for the sustainability of digital processes and initiatives.

Innovative governance and working

Internet and digital policies have incubated new working methods in international policy making. The WSIS "digital community" has promoted remote online meetings since the inception of the WSIS process, facilitating global stakeholder inclusion, which was proven critical when the world had to shift to online interaction during the COVID-19 pandemic.

WSIS processes have also strengthened the following governance features: a holistic approach, agility, and evidence-based policymaking. They have also become a 'collective memory' of digitalisation by collecting hundreds of stories and best practices that can speed up successes and reduce waste of funds and time in digital transformation projects and activities.

As pioneers in conference and dialogue innovation, the WSIS community should continue to be cutting-edge by using AI for reporting and organisation of events, as well as emerging virtual reality tools.

Inclusivity and meaningful participation in digital governance processes

The processes stemming from WSIS have led to the emergence of a policy framework that supports innovation and digital growth and have triggered dialogue about ethical and social responsibilities of all stakeholders. One of the big successes of the WSIS cooperation and dialogue processes are their broad impact on the global governance of the digital space.

In 2005, WSIS placed digital issues on the global policy agenda, paving the way for all subsequent international processes and initiatives. WSIS processes have enabled many more voices to express themselves in the digital space. Governments have developed capacities to deal with digital issues. Non-state actors, from businesses to academia and the technical community, have become active participants in relevant processes. But still, many voices are not heard, especially from developing and least developed countries and from marginalized or vulnerable groups from all around the world. As we aim to strengthen international digital cooperation, we should ensure that these voices are indeed heard by leveraging the multistakeholder spaces emanating from WSIS; they are crucial for incorporating diverse perspectives and ensuring that digital policies meet the needs of global users.

In the coming years, WSIS mechanisms should address the following to encourage even greater participation:

- Identifying and mitigating risks of miscommunication among diverse professional, national, and cultural communities as AI developments extend policy debates beyond traditional digital/internet spaces.

- Dealing with possible power asymmetries between, as well as within, different stakeholder groups.

- Continuing to assist stakeholders to participate meaningfully given their respective needs, capabilities, realities, and vulnerabilities.

- Avoid creating too many AI and digital governance processes and initiatives. The growing number of initiatives and processes could have a detrimental effect on policy inclusion and quality of policy deliberation.

In particular, governance inflation would impact actors from small and developing countries who do not have the financial and human resources to participate meaningfully in a high number of digital processes.

The WSIS Forum and the IGF could play critical roles as convergence points that simplify access to diverse policy spaces and processes.

Institutional frameworks

Based on the WSIS outcomes of 2003 and 2005, a robust and agile institutional framework for dealing with digital issues has been created. The implementation of the WSIS mandate for the UN System is coordinated by the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS); UN specialised agencies take a prominent role in the WSIS processes.

The IGF, as the platform for governance discussions under the Tunis Agenda, the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) serving as the reporting mechanism and supporting ECOSOC in overseeing the UN system-wide follow-up of WSIS outcomes, and with WSIS Action Lines follow-up under the umbrella of the WSIS Forum, offer comprehensive platforms for conversations on digital issues. The IGF has inspired and supported many national and regional IGF initiatives worldwide. These are examples of impactful developments that form a robust and solid basis for bringing digital policy debates to local communities worldwide.

The WSIS Stocktaking process provides a repository of activities – including projects, programs, training initiatives, conferences, websites, guidelines, toolkits, etc. – carried out by governments, international organizations, the private sector, civil society and other entities. The principal role of the WSIS Stocktaking exercise is to leverage the activities of stakeholders working on the implementation of WSIS outcomes and share knowledge and experience of projects by replicating successful models designed to achieve the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Projects from the ground are recognized and rewarded by the WSIS Prizes contest annually.

The Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development is an international, multi-stakeholder initiative that was launched in 2004 to improve the availability and quality of ICT data and indicators, particularly in developing countries. The Partnership has guided policy makers in producing ICT statistics that are crucial to informed decision-making, including through the identification of a core list of ICT indicators and methodologies to collect these indicators.

And importantly: The WSIS mechanisms have facilitated a functional interplay between multilateral and multistakeholder governance. These different approaches to governance should not be seen as mutually exclusive, but as complementary. And both types need to further develop to become more transparent, inclusive and accountable to all people in the world. In this regard, the São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines, adopted at the Netmundial+10 conference in April this year, can serve as a blueprint for more trustworthy, inclusive and accountable governance in multilateral as well as multistakeholder processes.

Continuous relevance of WSIS outcomes

Twenty years ago, the overarching goal of WSIS was to create a path towards an inclusive, people-centred and development-centred information and digital society. Although much has changed since then, WSIS outcomes remain highly relevant, particularly the Geneva Plan of Action, providing a comprehensive roadmap for leveraging ICTs for sustainable development and social inclusion. The WSIS Principles and Action Lines continue to serve as a pertinent framework for discussions on digital policy and governance issues. WSIS values and principles have been referenced in many policy documents over the years, and

they have been further developed in the framework of instruments, such as UNESCO's R.O.A.M. principles[5], ITU's Global Cybersecurity Agenda, and others across the UN system.

Multistakeholder mechanisms emanating from WSIS – the IGF and the WSIS Forum – have stood the test of time and adapted their focus to reflect the fast-evolving digital space and the opportunities and challenges associated with both 'old' and 'new' digital technologies.

Global digital cooperation mechanisms should maintain the formula of 'variable governance geometry' of being close enough to foster a framework for digital growth and far enough to leave space for the innovation and creativity that underpins digitalisation. The main challenge will be getting this formula right for the AI era, where numerous delicate trade-offs need to be struck between opportunities and risks triggered by AI.

The anniversary year of WSIS in 2025 will provide the context for further improving our approaches to digital cooperation while relying on rich experience and wisdom gathered since 2005. The time has come to think boldly and widely about a "WSIS Plus", a strengthened and further developed inclusive framework for digital governance and cooperation which will be fit-for-purpose and serve us well as we enter an era of fast and uncertain AI and digital developments.

Towards the Summit of the Future and beyond

The Summit of the Future should facilitate many futures and various perspectives as it was highlighted during the Forum discussions. Past achievements should guide future progress, with WSIS outcomes providing a comprehensive roadmap for leveraging ICTs - now digital technologies - for sustainable development and social inclusion. The need for multistakeholder collaboration and innovation was highlighted.

There was a broad agreement not only that existing structures, including the WSIS Forum and AI for Good Global Summit, which were held in conjunction in Geneva this week, as well as the IGF, should be the basis to further implementing the WSIS vision, but also that they should be further strengthened and leveraged through the Global Digital Compact and in support of its implementation. All these processes have the legitimacy and the experience needed to continue to serve as inclusive spaces where UN agencies (through UNGIS), international and regional organisations, governments, the private sector, the technical community and civil society come together to address their digital issues in inclusive, informed, and impactful ways.

Moving forward, they should serve the shared goal of further developing inclusive, people-centred and development-oriented digital information and knowledge societies which enable all people in the world to benefit from new technologies, including AI, so that no one is left behind.

Done at Geneva, 31 May 2024.

[5] UNESCO developed the concept of Internet Universality, which includes the four fundamental R.O.A.M principles: The Internet should be human Rights-based, Open, Accessible to all and nurtured by Multistakeholder participation. For more information, see https://www.unesco.org/en/internet-universality-indicators

MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE
28 May 2024 13:30 – 15:30 CET

WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024 Ministerial Roundtable

Summary

The Ministers provided an overview of the progress and challenges in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and emphasized that WSIS has been pivotal in uniting governments and stakeholders in the ICT domain since its creation. However, there are significant challenges ahead to connect the remaining 2.6 billion people worldwide who are unconnected.

The Ministers acknowledged the potential of technology for both positive and negative uses, prompting a call for greater responsibility and accountability from platform providers in combatting online threats. To address the evolving issues that accompany technological advancements, there is a need to strengthen digital cooperation between governments and with the private sector.

The Ministers recognized the importance of WSIS being able to adapt and integrate new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), ensuring its continued relevance in global digital governance.

Key themes from the Ministers' interventions include:

1. **Connectivity and Infrastructure Development**: The development of ICT infrastructure, such as broadband and fiber optics, is crucial for improving connectivity, especially in underserved areas.

2. **Inclusivity and Bridging the Digital Divide**: Ensuring that the benefits of ICT reach all populations, including vulnerable and rural communities, is vital for democratizing access to technology.

3. **Digital Literacy and Capacity Building**: Training and capacity-building initiatives in digital skills are essential to equip individuals and communities to use ICT effectively.

4. **Cross-border Data Flow and Cybersecurity**: Cybersecurity strategies, concerns about cross-border data flow and the role of big companies in data asymmetry are significant points of discussion for advancing the role of digital in development.

5. **E-Government and Digital Services**: Progress in e-government platforms and digital public services aims to improve government efficiency and citizen access to services.

6. **Financial Inclusion and E-Payment Systems**: Leveraging ICT for financial inclusion involves the development of e-payment and e-banking systems, particularly for remote areas.

7. **Response to COVID-19**: The pandemic has accelerated digital technology adoption and underscored the need for robust ICT infrastructure.

8. **Regulatory Frameworks and Policy Development**: Regulatory frameworks are key to managing ICT development, including data protection and AI ethics.

9. **Collaboration and Global Partnerships**: International collaboration, as facilitated by WSIS, is crucial for overcoming challenges and achieving ICT goals.

10. **Technological Innovation and Emerging Technologies**: Innovation and the adoption of emerging technologies are seen as essential for economic growth and development.

The Ministers concluded as follows:

• The interventions shared underscore a collective commitment to harnessing ICT for socioeconomic advancement, increasing inclusivity, and ensuring that the digital transformation benefits everyone.

• The WSIS Principles and Action Lines continue to serve as a time-tested reference for global digital discussions.

• The outcomes of the WSIS, namely, the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action along with the Tunis Commitment and Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, adopted by the Heads of States and Government, remain the foundation for global digital policies and cooperation. They support our shared vision of a people-centered, inclusive and development oriented information and knowledge societies that fully respect and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

• The upcoming WSIS+20 review offers a prime opportunity for evolving the WSIS Outcomes to encompass the latest advancements moving forward, integrating new technologies such as AI, and ensuring that the WSIS continues to support inclusive global digital governance and digital development. • The WSIS Forum has been the time-tested multistakeholder platform for deliberations on digital development policies, exchanging best practices, and fostering partnerships.

• The WSIS should be leveraged for the follow-up and implementation of the Global Digital Compact (GDC). Its established Principles and Action Lines remain central in global digital discussions, as clearly demonstrated in recent declarations.

Leaders TalkX: Forging Partnerships: Shaping the "Digital for Development" Landscape

Recording: https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/372

Moderated by High-level Track Facilitator:
Ms. Karen McCabe, Senior Director, Public Affairs & Marketing, IEEE

UN Representative:
Mr. Mario Maniewicz, Director, Radiocommunication Bureau, ITU

Speakers:

1. **Barbados:** H.E. Ms. Marsha Caddle, Minister, Ministry of Industry, Innovation, Science & Technology
2. **Somalia**: H.E. Mr. Mohamed Adam Moalim, Minister, Ministry of Communications and Technology
3. **State Of Palestine:** H.E. Mr. Mousa Abu Zaid, Chairman, General Personnel Council
4. **Thailand:** Mr. Trairat Viriyasirikul, Deputy Secretary General Acting Secretary General, Office of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission
5. **Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO):** Ms. Deemah AlYahya, Secretary General
6. **Internet Governance Forum (IGF):** Ms. Carol Roach, Chair of the UN IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group

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Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator

Introduction

This Leaders TalkX session underscored the pivotal role of governments and stakeholders in driving ICTs for development. It emphasized the need for cooperation; the impact of effective participation of all entities; and provided examples of local and national strategies and actions.

Key Observations

The recognition of the significant role of digital technology in development, notably in a rapidly changing world, as it provides opportunities for helping to improve socio-economic challenges; and how technology serves as means to uplift communities, drive innovation, and promote sustainable development.

- This journey toward digital development for good requires collective action and partnerships at both national and international levels.
- ICTs are more than connectivity or information access. They are not only about network coverage or service quality but seen as through the lens of a regulation or a strategy, they can help promote sustainability and their use for development to ensure that people can fully benefit from ICTs.
- More work needs to be done as in 2024, despite rapid advancement in the digital world, 2.6 billion people–approximately one-third of the global population–still are unconnected to the internet.
- There are rising challenges and opportunities with the introduction of technologies such as Artificial Intelligence.
- Green ICT is important as ICTs can help with climate and sustainability monitoring.

Example of Actions

- In Somalia, the Digital Inclusion Policy, aligned with the countries 201902024 National ICT Policy and Strategy, which encompasses working with local groups to improve healthcare, education, and financial access through technology and building 4600 kilometres of infrastructure to provide affordable internet, especially in rural areas.
- In Thailand, the Thailand 5G Smart Ports project aims to study the potential of smart port development by using 5G and green technologies, while preparing employees for digital transformation. In this project, three main semi-automated ports in Thailand are expected to transform into Green Automation ports by using 5G and green technologies for their port logistics.
- DCO's groundbreaking digital marketplace promotes multilateral partnership and cooperation within the DCO ecosystem, which facilitates knowledge exchange among DCO Member States, cultivating digital ecosystems, and enhancing capabilities for effective government transformation. The platform promotes the adoption of digital solutions to improve government operation and service delivery, foster economic growth, innovation, investment attraction, and job creation.
- The UN Internet Governance Forum Multi Stakeholder Group (MAG), progression and growth where it convenes over 9000 participants from around the world to address digital policy issues and provide action-based insights for addressing the complex challenges and opportunities presented by the digital age.

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BARBADOS

H.E. Ms. Marsha Caddle
Minister
Ministry of Industry, Innovation, Science & Technology

Question:

[Missing Question]

[MISSING STATEMENT]

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SOMALIA

H.E. Mr. Mohamed Adam Moalim
Minister
Ministry of Communications and Technology

Question:

Somalia is demonstrating a strong commitment to digital transformation. We'd be interested to learn more about how your Ministry is developing a comprehensive Digital Inclusion Policy. Specifically, could you elaborate on the strategies your Ministry is considering to ensure equitable access, build trust in digital services, and address the needs of underserved communities?

As the Minister of Communications and Technology of Somalia, I am honored to join this panel discussion on the role of digital technology in development. In our rapidly changing world, digital transformation offers hope, promoting inclusivity, efficiency, and progress for countries facing socio-economic challenges. Somalia is committed to using technology to uplift communities, drive innovation, and promote sustainable development. Our focus is on ensuring every citizen benefits through our Digital Inclusion Policy, which guides us towards a more equitable digital future. This policy aligns with our 2019-2024 National ICT Policy and Strategy. I'm proud to share our efforts in digital transformation.

1. Equitable Access: We're building 4600 kilometers of infrastructure to provide affordable internet, especially in rural areas.

2. Building Trust: We've created data protection laws and digital literacy programs to help people use digital services safely.

3. Underserved Communities: We're working with local groups to improve healthcare, education, and financial access through technology.

In conclusion, Somalia is dedicated to using digital technology for sustainable development, as outlined in our National ICT Policy and Strategy. This journey requires collective action and partnerships at both national and international levels. I urge all stakeholders to join us in building a more inclusive, resilient, and prosperous digital future for Somalia and beyond.

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STATE OF PALESTINE

H.E. Mr. Mousa Abu Zaid
Chairman
General Personnel Council

Question:

How can government effectively engage diverse stakeholders in developing national e-strategies for ICT-driven development in the State of Palestine?

Esteemed delegates,

As we gather today at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), I am deeply honored to address you on the pivotal role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in driving global progress, fostering inclusivity, and improving the quality of life for people worldwide.

In Palestine, our journey towards digital transformation is marked by the unique challenges of conflict, which has heavily impacted our telecommunications and IT sectors. Yet, amidst the conflict and destruction, our commitment remains unwavering. And our endeavors align with national agendas and sectoral strategies, fostering a culture of digital transformation, and empowering Palestinians to thrive in the digital economy.

Despite all challenges we have achieved remarkable progress in the field of telecommunications and information technology. The Ministry of Telecommunications and Digital Economy, in collaboration with government institutions, the private sector, and academia, has prioritized digitization. This national effort aims to confidently propel digital transformation, aligning with the national policy for digital transformation. It provides guidelines for state institutions to formulate plans for seamless digital integration, serving our people and achieving sustainable development goals.

We have formulated a policy for digital accessibility, extending fiber-optic networks in most cities and towns for widespread internet access. These networks have reached homes, schools, health centers and post offices with 144,000 subscribers and an average broadband speed surpassing 64 Mbps in 2023, we have significantly improved Palestine's global ranking from 169 in 2019 to 75 in 2023. We are also collaborating with the private sector and civil society with a focus on connecting rural and out of reach areas (designated C in the Oslo Accords).

We remain steadfast in our pursuit of 4G and 5G spectrum rights and essential equipment to introduce these advanced internet services in Palestine, the absence of such connectivity severely impedes the Palestinian people's access to digitalization and digital inclusion. However, our journey towards such advanced services has been fraught with obstacles, in 2019 we approached the Israeli counterparts to secure fourth and fifth-generation operating frequencies, and an agreement was reached in 2022 following

numerous negotiations. Despite ongoing challenges imposed by the opposing party, efforts to activate the services are currently in progress as we remain resolute, actively negotiating with neighboring countries and partners to secure frequencies and equipment essential for the digital future and roadmap of Palestine.

Additionally, the local Palestine Internet Exchange (PSIX) have been connected to regional exchange points contributing to a more efficient, cost effective, and secure internet environment. Also, we've enhanced public safety through the establishment of a national data center, based on private cloud computing, providing hosting services for government institutions and ministries. And efforts are underway to establish a disaster recovery site (DRS) to ensure continuous service provision in case of emergencies. In parallel we are working on establishing a unified 911 emergency response centers to ensure early and efficient emergency response.

As we aim to streamline electronic service provision, reduce time and costs, and enhance overall efficiency of public services, we have launched the unified portal for electronic government services, Hukumati, the unified single sign-on (SSO), and the government electronic payment portal. Simultaneously, we are actively developing digital governmental services and creating an enabling environment through projects such as Digital West Bank and Gaza and, Technology for Youth and Jobs. serving as a noteworthy example of Public-Private Partnerships and Multi-sector partnerships in Palestine.

We have successfully crafted the "Digital Palestine Agenda 2030" as a national reference, focusing on comprehensive digital development. Additionally, we have embraced emerging technologies through the adoption of the National Artificial Intelligence Policy and Strategy, the Open Data Policy, and the Ethical Charter for Artificial Intelligence, along with the preparation of the National Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy. Furthermore, the Ministry's Technological Creativity and Innovation Center, in collaboration with partner institutions, actively supports leadership and innovation in these domains.

To support ICT's development, we emphasize capacity building, training, and experience exchange in emerging technologies. Furthermore, we prioritize regional and international cooperation in the communications and information technology sector through joint projects and initiatives, reflecting our continuous journey and unwavering commitment to ICT's improvement to achieve sustainability.

Collaboration stands as the bedrock of our efforts. The Ministry of Telecommunications and Digital Economy, in partnership with government agencies, international organizations, the private sector, and academia, is leading the charge in prioritizing and advancing digital transformation and the digital economy.

Our commitment extends beyond infrastructure and governance. As we navigate the complexities of our digital journey, global collaboration is paramount. By sharing knowledge, resources, and best practices, we can accelerate progress towards a more inclusive and sustainable digital future.

In closing, I extend heartfelt gratitude for your steadfast support and solidarity. Let us seize the platform provided by WSIS to reaffirm our dedication to harnessing ICTs for the betterment of humanity, leaving no one behind.

Thank you.

THAILAND

Mr. Trairat Viriyasirikul
Deputy Secretary General Acting Secretary General
Office of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission

Question:

As the telecommunications regulator, how does the NBTC support the use of ICTs and manage frequency allocation to foster sustainable development in the future?

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an opportunity to be here with you in this session that allow me to share our work towards the promotion of ICTs for development in Thailand.

It is also an opportunity to learn from other panelists on this matter.

Since the spectrum auction for 3G service in 2010, the telecommunications sector in Thailand has grown very fast, even faster with the auctions for 4G, and 5G. These auctions not only promoted significant investment in telecommunications infrastructure but also facilitated network coverage expansion and enhanced service quality. By 2022, nearly 99 percent of the Thai population had access to at least 4G mobile coverage, and most of the area in Thailand is already covered by 5G.

As the telecommunication regulator, one of the NBTC's key missions is to regulate telecommunication services for the benefit of people, including fostering fair competition in the market. Today, ICTs are more than connectivity or information access. That's why the NBTC is now exploring how ICTs can be used to drive meaningful development and sustainability.

Since 2020, the NBTC, together with the Bank of Thailand, has conducted the research about the 5G Sectoral Adoption to see the potential and readiness of various sectors for 5G adoption. It was our very first step to understand how we can promote ICTs for development in different and diverse sectors.

The NBTC has supported many projects across various sectors, including industry, academic, agriculture, tourism, and public health. For example, in the public health sector, the NBTC supported 'the Smart Hospital Project with 5G Technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) of Siriraj Hospital' in 2022, showing how hospitals can integrate ICTs like 5G and AI into traditional healthcare services to improve efficiency, such as an emergency medical system, a diagnosis system, or even a pharmacy inventory management.

There are many interesting projects such as 'the USO Net Center' which is one of our key missions mandated by law called 'Universal Service Obligation'. We've provided public wireless networks for villages, especially in schools, in order to ensure that everyone can benefit from ICTs wherever they are. Or the project we're planning called 'the Green 5G and Beyond" aiming to promote 5G and relevant technologies to reduce Greenhouse gases and carbon emission to earn more carbon credits.

Besides supporting projects, we also encourage ICTs adoption through initiatives such as granting spectrum licenses for innovation experiments in the regulatory sandbox, taking into account the goals of the National Strategy Plan, the National Digital Economy and Society Development Plan and Policy, and the new Telecom Master Plan that also focuses on sustainable resource management.

Now, I would like to share with you the two projects in Thailand that the NBTC aims to promote the use of ICTs for development and sustainability.

The first project is called Thailand 5G Smart Ports, initiated in 2022 and led by the Port Authority of Thailand. The project aims to study the potential of smart port development by using 5G and green technologies, while preparing employees for digital transformation. In this project, three main semi-automated ports in Thailand are expected to transform into Green Automation ports by using 5G and green technologies for their port logistics. Moreover, the 5G technology is expected to reduce energy consumption and human error, increase accuracy and safety, but not replace human.

The second project that I would like to share is called the 'Land Bridge project', which is the infrastructure and transportation service development megaproject, aiming to accommodate and modernize maritime transport in the region between the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean by connecting Chumphon Port and Ranong Port by 2030, making the transport more efficient by saving time, cost, and energy. Under the concept 'Bridging the East and the West Closer Together', this project is expected to boost Thailand's economic growth and bring more investment mobilization from both domestic and international investors. As a telecommunications regulator, the NBTC is expecting to support this megaproject by promoting ICTs adoption to accommodate the activities related to it, such as double-track railway operation and pipeline transport management operated by 5G for seamless connectivity.

In conclusion, the regulator's role regarding ICTs is not only about network coverage or service quality, but also a regulation or a strategy that can promote sustainability and the use of ICTs for development to ensure that people can fully benefit from ICTs.

I hope that the story I just shared with you during this session about the role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development could be useful.

Thank you.

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DIGITAL COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (DCO)

H.E. Ms. Deemah AlYahya
Secretary General

Question:

Ms. Deemah AlYahya, what makes the Digital Cooperation Organization unique from other international entities in terms of your approach to bridging the digital divide and promoting the growth of an inclusive and sustainable digital economy? Can you highlight the distinctive elements in DCO's strategies, initiatives, and partnerships that contribute to achieving your mission of digital cooperation and social prosperity?

In 2024, despite rapid advancement in the digital world, much remains to be desired, with 2.6 billion people–approximately one-third of the global population–still unconnected to the internet. The divide is even more prominent among gender lines, with 244 million more men than women using the internet in 2023. This is particularly pressing in regions with limited access to digital infrastructure and among low-income individuals. In these areas, internet penetration is as low as 27%, leading them to miss out on the boundless opportunities afforded by the digital economy. To put it into context, raising the internet penetration to 75% in the developing world is predicted to increase global GDP by $2 trillion and create 140 million jobs globally. Therefore, shaping the digital development landscape must be a joint effort, ensuring that all segments of our countries and communities can harness the opportunities of the digital age. This is where the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO) steps in, to bridge the gap.

The DCO's approach is rooted in inclusivity, with our mission being Digital Prosperity for All. Unlike traditional models, the DCO recognizes the undeniable digital divide existing both between and within countries. This acknowledgement drives the DCO to forge multistakeholder partnerships, bringing together diverse parties, including governments, the private sector, international organizations, NGOs, academia, and civil society, to collectively address these disparities. The DCO's organizational structure itself is built upon the value of inclusivity, ensuring that our policies and initiatives prioritize closing the digital gap.

Currently, the digital economy makes up more than 15% of the global GDP and has grown 2.5 times faster over the past ten years than the GDP of the non-digital world. As this new world transforms rapidly, the DCO refuses to settle for the status quo which leaves behind entire sections of the society. This has spurred the DCO to set ambitious targets and strive relentlessly to achieve them. One such target is '30 by 30'--a vision for an efficient and prosperous future where the digital economy will contribute 30% to the global GDP and create 30 million jobs by 2030. The DCO plans to achieve this by empowering youth, women, and entrepreneurs; boosting national MSMEs and ICT sectors, and harnessing the transformative power of digital innovation to drive sustainable development.

Furthermore, the DCO's strategic initiatives are designed to deliver tangible impact. From enhancing cross-border data flows to promoting market expansion for SMEs, empowering digital entrepreneurs, and

advancing digital inclusion among underrepresented populations, the DCO's programs are tailored to address the specific needs of its member states. By fostering dialogue and cooperation, the DCO facilitates the creation of mutually beneficial cross-border legislation and policies that lay the foundation for inclusive and equitable digital economies.

Partnerships are the key to the DCO's success. By collaborating closely with governments, businesses, and civil society organizations, the DCO amplifies its impact and leverages collective expertise and resources. The DCO's cooperative efforts ensure that its initiatives are not only effective, but also sustainable in the long run.

Take, for instance, our Digital FDI enabling project, a collaboration between the DCO and the Ministries of ICT in several Member States. This project aims to identify specific policies, regulations, and other actions to facilitate increased foreign direct investment in the digital economies of DCO Member States. We facilitate in-depth multistakeholder discussions on policy options through surveys, interviews, consultations, and workshops. These discussions encompass various areas including regulatory frameworks, institutional arrangements, incentives for digital infrastructure, and access to financing, among others. Through DFDI, Member States are empowered to strategically drive initiatives. These initiatives include enabling the establishment and licensing of domestic data centers, facilitating cloud storage, enhancing competitiveness in the regional and international investment landscape, positioning them as a hub for digital services exports, and fostering a skilled workforce through targeted training programs focused on digital issues.

Some of the DCO's other successful multisectoral and multistakeholder partnership driven initiatives include:

IMPACT: A groundbreaking digital marketplace promoting multilateral partnership and cooperation within the DCO ecosystem. It facilitates knowledge exchange among DCO Member States, cultivating digital ecosystems, and enhancing capabilities for effective government transformation. The platform promotes the adoption of digital solutions to improve government operation and service delivery, foster economic growth, innovation, investment attraction, and job creation.

WE-Elevate: An initiative empowering women-led MSMEs in DCO Member States, which adopts a multifaceted approach, providing digital enablement, global market access, capacity building, financial tools, and advocating for gender responsive policies.

Digital Space Accelerator: The DSA is an innovative cooperation mechanism that brings together experts and decision makers from various sectors, including governments, private enterprises, and international entities with the aim of fostering sustainable and inclusive digital economy growth. The activities focus on topics such as online content misinformation, digital rights, empowering women in ICT, digital skills for youth, tax incentives for the ICT sector, and public-private partnerships.

DCO Startup Guides: An initiative that aims to empower entrepreneurs in our Member States to establish startups across DCO Member States. These guides provide comprehensive support, offering information on company registration processes, incentives, market data, and links to relevant official websites.

UN Group of Friends for Digital Cooperation: This initiative advocates for inclusive and sustainable growth in the global digital economy and aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The group prioritizes global policies and strategies for inclusive digital cooperation and facilitates knowledge exchange among member states, while coordinating initiatives to advance the digital economy on a global scale.

The DCO's commitment to inclusivity coupled with our ambitious targets, impactful initiatives, and strategic partnerships position the organization as a bridge in the digital development landscape. By championing multistakeholder dialogue and public-private partnerships, DCO is a pivotal force in enabling inclusive and sustainable development and global digital prosperity.

INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM (IGF)

Ms. Carol Roach
Chair of the UN IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group

Question:

Digital cooperation is vital to drive ICTs for development. As the Chair of the IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group, how is the Internet Governance Forum meaningfully engaging diverse actors at local, regional and global levels to contribute to an enabling digital environment?

Distinguished Participants,

Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to be here with you today.

As the Chair of the UN Internet Governance Forum Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG), I have been privileged to serve as appointee of the UN Secretary-General, together with the other 40 members that form the IGF MAG.

As a multistakeholder, multidisciplinary, global group from all parts of the world, we advise the Secretary-General on the programme of the IGF, tackling digital policy issues by providing our diverse perspectives.

The Forum operates on a multistakeholder basis, where all stakeholders participate on an equal footing. The IGF has proven, lasting and direct impacts on the development of digital policies across the world and has served as a "crucial connection point" that forges new or strengthens existing partnerships.

But the IGF is more than an annual Forum that convenes yearly over 9000 participants, including high-level leaders, and in which government and private sector participation has been strong.

The IGF is an ecosystem with more than 170 organic and bottom-up national and regional IGF initiatives. This means that there is an IGF for nearly every country in the world that brings together diverse stakeholders addressing digital policy issues at the local levels.

The establishment of these national and regional IGF initiatives has also elevated unheard voices at global levels. We noticed a considerable increase of participants from developing countries and from youth at the annual Forum, meaningfully engaging in the digital governance discourse.

Throughout the year, IGF stakeholders also participate and collaborate in intersessional activities covering the full digital policy spectrum.

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Multistakeholder groups of experts collectively work on substantive activities, such as the Policy Network on Artificial Intelligence or Cybersecurity issues. We have also seen the creation of over 30 so called Dynamic Coalitions, the latest dealing with digital financial inclusion.

The IGF's Parliamentary Track has gone from strength to strength and has engaged legislators in every region.

The IGF Youth Track grew a network of future leaders, connecting youth and senior stakeholders through capacity development workshops, as the sustainability of the digital governance ecosystem requires the engagement of the next generation of users, experts and leaders.

The most significant opportunity today, is the potential of digital transformation to contribute to economic and social development. We should further encourage this journey, especially for developing states, as digitalization can positively affect the lives of citizens and their economies.

The success lies in meaningful access and universal connectivity, harnessing digital technologies in a safe, enriching, productive, and affordable manner, for all. As the Internet cannot be dealt with from a one-dimensional perspective, collaborative, equitable and inclusive digital governance is imperative.

Rooted in innovation, businesses play a crucial role in the digital ecosystem. Their involvement is vital in addressing the complex challenges and opportunities presented by the digital age and it is important to recognize that digital governance must also serve the broader public good.

As such, we are focusing this year on further involving the private sector and start-up scene in advancing the Knowledge Society.

While much has to be done for the world to really reach the potential of digital supporting sustainable development, the good news is that we have already created good platforms to enable this. WSIS and the IGF are certainly one of those.

With this, I would like to invite you to the IGF 2024 taking place from 15 to 19 December in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia under the overarching theme of "Building our Multistakeholder Digital Future".

I thank you very much.

Leaders TalkX: The Connectivity Imperative: Laying the Foundation for Inclusive Information Access

Recording: https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/376

Moderated by High-level Track Facilitator:
Prof. François Grey, Associate Professor & Dean of Studies, Geneva School of Economics and Management, University of Geneva

UN Representative:
Ms. Nur Sulyna Abdullah, Deputy Director, Chief, Strategic Planning and Membership, and Special Advisor to the Secretary-General, ITU

Speakers:

1. **Burkina Faso:** H.E. Dr. Aminata Zerbo Sabane, Minister, Ministry of Digital Transition, Posts and Electronic Communications
2. **Iran:** H.E. Dr. Mohammad Khansari, Deputy Minister of Communications, Ministry of Information and Communications Technology
3. **Lithuania:** H.E. Dr. Agnė Vaiciukevičiūtė, Vice-Minister, Ministry of Transport and Communications
4. **Armenia:** Mr. Garegin Baghramyan, Chairman, Public Services Regulatory Commission

5. **Colombia:** Ms. Lina María Duque Del Vecchio, Executive Director, Comisión de Regulación de Comunicaciones
6. **Gabon:** Ms. Aline Minko Mi Etoua, Secretary General, Ministry of Digital Economy and New Information Technologies
7. **The Atlantic Council**: Ms. Rose Jackson, Director, Tech and Democracy Initiative

Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator

[MISSING SUMMARY].

BURKINA FASO

H.E. Dr. Aminata Zerbo Sabane
Minister
Ministry of Digital Transition, Posts and Electronic Communications

Question:

How has the security situation impacted the country's objectives in terms of inclusive access to information, and what resilience strategy is Burkina Faso implementing to continue to improve this access despite the crisis?

Excellencies,
Honored Guest
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Mr. Moderator,

I am honored to stand before you today to represent my country Burkina Faso in the World Summit on the Information Society 2024. But before continuing my statements, I would like to thank the Swiss Confederation and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) for this kind invitation which honors my country and for the pleasant hospitality that we have experienced since our arrival. I would also like to congratulate the ITU and Madam Secretary General for the quality of the organization of the work of this Summit.

This year's theme, "Information and communication for the common good in an open and inclusive society", is particularly relevant for our country, which is going through a period of significant security challenges.

To answer the question of "How the security situation has impacted the country's objectives in terms of inclusive access to information and what resilience strategy is Burkina Faso implementing to continue to improve this access despite the crisis?", I will first make an assessment of the situation and the strong actions generated by this situation.

It should be noted from the outset that the security crisis that Burkina Faso is going through has had a profound impact on our country, particularly in terms of access to information. Indeed, numerous acts of vandalism and targeted destruction of communications infrastructure, such as radiomobile sites and fiber optic networks have been perpetrated by terrorists to further isolate already battered populations, increase terror and psychosis but also prevent communication between populations and the terrorists. These acts, which affected nearly 20% of sites, considerably reduced the coverage of electronic communications services in areas with high security challenges.

These destructions also led to a significant deterioration in the quality of services, due to the interdependencies between telecommunications sites.

The quality of services has also been degraded in certain localities due to the large influx of populations displaced by terrorist attacks.

Finally, this security crisis has slowed the development of electronic communications infrastructures, notably the fiber optic network and the country's interconnection with its neighbors due to the inaccessibility of certain areas.

Thus, to deal with this critical situation, Burkina Government implemented the provisions relating to the exceptional measures provided for by the regulations of the sector to restore electronic communications in the impacted areas in order to guarantee the continuity of the tele communications service and subsequently inclusive access to information. This has resulted in specific subsidies to strengthen or rehabilitate passive support infrastructure and energy systems based on photovoltaic renewable energies. We have also established close cooperation between mobile network operators and defense and security forces to secure and quickly restore communications networks.

This rehabilitation is being done by following the dynamic of reconquest of our territory in which our armed forces are resolutely engaged.

It is true that today, the security context requires us to prioritize the security and reconquest of our territory, but we are convinced that development for all is one of the best responses to terrorism and digital technology has a great contribution to also bring on this front. To do this, we are continuing the development of very high-speed transport and access networks throughout the country with an acceleration of the coverage of white zones and the finalization of the interconnection with the various neighboring countries. The strengthening of these electronic communications infrastructures provides us with the necessary basis to accelerate the dematerialization of public administration services engaged in all sectors. Through strong partnerships with multilateral technical and financial organizations and partner countries, we also establish advanced information collection and processing systems. These systems have a crucial role in our fight against insecurity and urban crime, enabling a rapid and effective response to threats.

Finally, specific actions are also planned to support disadvantaged populations. We place particular emphasis on the accessibility of electronic communications services for people with disabilities and internally displaced persons, including compatible terminals, to ensure that no one is left behind in this information society, for this we rely on the universal service access fund.

All these initiatives are part of the vision of the Transition under the leadership of His Excellency Captain Ibrahim TRAORE. Its strong commitment to the digitalization of public processes, which it places at the heart of the reform and modernization of the administration, aims to improve the quality and access of services offered to citizens, to fight against corruption and reduce the digital divide. It is about providing access to information for everyone, everywhere in the country, despite the challenges we encounter and allowing everyone to take advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technology.

Digital technology is therefore today, in the context of Burkina Faso, a formidable instrument of resilience, the fight against terrorism and an essential ally for socio-economic development.

In conclusion, our resilience strategy is based on strengthened cooperation, targeted investments and a firm commitment to digital inclusion. We remain committed to overcoming obstacles to ensure inclusive access to information and contribute to the development of our nation.
This forum offers me the opportunity to reaffirm the commitment of my country, Burkina Faso, to work alongside the other members of the union, despite the difficult context in which we live, for the development of a inclusive digital technology, which contributes to Peace and Security for all and which is resolutely at

the service of the well-being of populations. I am convinced that, together, we can, in solidarity, build a more inclusive and fairer information society for all.

Thank you to the moderator and all the participants in this Session for your kind attention.

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IRAN

H.E. Dr. Mohammad Khansari
Deputy Minister of Communications
Ministry of Information and Communications Technology

Question:

What are the most outstanding achievements of Iran's in the development of ICT infrastructure during recent years? What have been your goals, strategies and approaches to such developments?

Dear Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to explain our special situation to prove how important the role of the government in Iran is for building the infrastructure. Due to the pressure of sanctions on our infrastructure, the role of government here has become more crucial than in other countries that normally give priority to the private sector to invest because they have enough incentives to do so. As a result of these sanctions, some of these incentives may disappear for the private sector, and this is where the government in Iran steps in and fills the gap while leaving more profitable areas to the private sector.

With this background, I am pleased to say that we managed to develop our infrastructure in recent years amidst harsh sanctions. The list is long, and I cannot recite all of them, but to give you some examples, I can say more than 3000 villages are connected to the national information network, and the number of villages with more than twenty households connected to the network reached 35000 villages. Or we launched the first phase of the national E-Government platform, which connects 98% of public entities with 3000 services to promote digital governance. For instance, offering identity services such as issuing newborn birth certificates, name or surname change, birth certificates, death certificates, value-added tax, inheritance tax, vehicle transfer tax, passport issuance and judicial services. These services are offered in 181 hospitals, 238 universities and 52 large city municipalities.

As a result of the development of the infrastructure in the broadband connection, currently, the cellular mobile connection compared with the population is 140%, the mobile broadband penetration rate is 124.18%, and the fixed broadband penetration rate is 13.05%. So, most Iranians have access to broadband, especially mobile broadband. By the end of 2025, Iran is trying to provide 80% of households with access to fixed broadband with an average access speed of 50 Mbps and 100% coverage of the country's population for mobile broadband access with an average speed of 30 Mbps.

We are also on our way to connecting all urban schools to the national network of information with fiber optics at a speed of at least 100 megabits by the end of 2025. Currently, 76,000 schools are connected to the National Information Network, and more than 95% of them receive free services.

Furthermore, we have plans to make our country the main transitional line to reduce ping time between east and west and build at least three nationwide data centers. We will also build the country's largest space base in the near future.

I hope this short explanation reveals how much we managed to expand the country's capacity for growing its digital economy. Iran has great potential investment opportunities in these sections, but we have difficulties attracting foreign investment due to sanctions. Despite all this, Iran, with its active participation in the policymaking bodies, has always been trying to seriously pursue its development plans along with maximum international collaboration and participation.

Thank you for your attention.

LITHUANIA

H.E. Dr. Agnė Vaiciukevičiūtė
Vice-Minister
Ministry of Transport and Communications

Question:

From your perspective, what are the key drivers towards successful connectivity imperative and what recommendations could you share for ensuring inclusive information access?

According to ITU Dashboard, Lithuania has achieved or almost achieved all the targets for universal and meaningful connectivity already. The key driver to success was the synergy of actions of all stakeholders, with the whole process being coordinated by the Government. The main role of the Government lies in coordinating and ensuring an effective legal and regulatory ecosystem, which sets the targets and establishes periodic monitoring and evaluation procedures. We can share our examples about this journey.

Electronic communications networks must be granted the status of vital infrastructure: being connected is tantamount to having water or electricity. This kind of mindset should find its place in a political agenda, as well as in the legal framework regulating construction and operations.

Lithuania's case in point: granting the high-level status to 5G deployment. It means mapping the whole territory of Lithuania and the preparation of a general territorial planning document, which will shorten the procedures of 5G and even 6G networks deployment at a later stage. The Government has allocated financial resources for this project.

The connectivity gap between rural areas and cities still exists, therefore bridging this gap is a key challenge to overcome. The Government should find financial instruments to support the deployment of infrastructure and to connect rural areas where there is no business case.

Lithuania's case in point: the Government established a non-profit company about 18 years ago, which uses public funds and deploys broadband infrastructure in rural and remote areas, offering wholesale services. Up until now, there are more than 11,000 km of deployed networks and almost 4,000 municipalities, schools, libraries, hospitals have been connected. Currently, the main measure aims to enable access to gigabit broadband infrastructure to 5,000 digitally sensitive users and receives EUR 49 million in funding. But the collaboration with the private sector was also key to the success because operators should offer services to the end-users. This Lithuanian model has also ensured the affordability of being connected – the prices for the wholesale services are based only on expenses, because the biggest

part of the investment are dedicated from public funding sources and at the same time ensures the same low price for all end-users no matter where they live, in the city or in a remote area.

Future telecommunications policy should correspond to the holistic approach and evaluate the ecosystem. We do believe the demand side could contribute to achieving the connectivity targets very much.

Lithuania's case in point: we've launched a SANDBOX initiative with more than EUR 24 million funding in order to inspire the market for innovations based on 5G in the areas such as autonomous transportation, drones, the Internet of Things, virtual reality and 5G-based robotization, etc. The main goal of this initiative is to create a Sandbox regime (financial, legal, regulatory environment) for creating and testing in a real environment innovative 5G-based solutions to address the most pressing challenges of society, business, and the public sector.

It is worth mentioning new challenges ahead: more efforts should be made in the areas of resilience of networks and the minimization of the environmental footprint of the telecommunications sector. The running of the networks must be supported by clean energy and running 2G, 3G, 4G, 5G and the coming 6G networks at the same time is not efficient and not in line with our sustainability targets. We should look for the ways forward and discuss possible future scenarios. The ITU's role and contribution on this topic would be valuable.

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TANZANIA

H.E. Mr. Nape Moses Nnauye
Minister
Ministry of Information, Communication and Information Technology

Question:

What are the main achievements in the area of infrastructure that have been made in Tanzania?

For the past two (2) decades a lot of achievements have been made in the area of infrastructure, promoting digital inclusivity, industrialization and innovation as detailed below in key areas.

ICT access for digital inclusion

The URT established a Universal Communications Service Access Fund (UCSAF) in 2007 under the Universal Communications Service Access Act; Cap 422 to ensure that communication as a universal right is accessible to its entire population. The Fund was established to facilitate access to communication services.

The Fund came into operation in 2009 to ensure that even those areas which are economically unviable have access to communication services (ICT, Postal and Broadcasting). While it is the responsibility of private entities to provide communication services, the Government came to realize that not all areas in the country could be economically viable for the provision of communication services. Through UCSAF's subsidy given to Mobile Network Operators (MNOs), several mobile communications infrastructures have been deployed. The URT through UCSAF has deployed a total of 2,158 towers in 1,974 wards with 5,111 villages. A total of 23,799,848 citizens have benefited from these projects to facilitate the deployment of electronic communication services in rural and underserved areas with the aim of improving access to communication services for the citizens in those areas.

The Fund is used for deployment of other ICT infrastructures for universal access including Radio Broadcasting Sites, Public WiFi Access Point, Public School Internet Connectivity and Telemedicine.

The country has also established initiatives towards increasing accessibility especially to marginalized groups/communities and people with disabilities (PWD). URT enacted The Electronic and Postal Communications Act, (Principal Legislation) Revised Edition 2022 and The Electronic and Postal Communications (Consumer Protection) Regulations, 2018. Both the "Principal Legislation" and "Consumer Protection Regulations" require service providers to take appropriate measures and ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access the communication premises and other relevant services.

The country through its Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) has been providing ICT equipment to selected Government schools targeting students with special needs. The equipment includes but not limited to Braille embossers and computers with accessories to facilitate access to students with visual impairment challenge. Other initiatives made include country-wise awareness programs on the use of communication services to PWD and development of Guidelines for Communication Services Accessibility to PWD, 2023.

The country is in the process of developing ICT/Communication Services Accessibility Standard, which will provide technical specifications and guidance to service providers (public and private) in the provision of accessible digital service.

It is worth acknowledging that user devices play a pivotal role in driving the adoption of telecommunication/ICT services. As of December 2023, the penetration of feature phones has risen to 85.62%, while smartphones have seen an increase to 32.12%. Therefore, more effort needs to be done to increase the use of smartphone to increase the access and digital inclusion.

Assistive Technologies

Several initiatives are underway in the country to promote the use of assistive technologies in delivery of various services such as education and customer service with the aim to empower PWDs and improve their overall quality of life.

The Open University of Tanzania offers tailored-made ICT training for PWDs to its students and the general public free of charge (more than 200 PWDs have been trained). The University use Non-Visual Desktop Access (NVDA) to enhance the use of ICT by the visually impaired. The University also use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to upgrade the e-learning management system to cater for those with visual and hearing impairments. There is an ongoing development of a prototype for an online examination module for visually impaired students.

One of Mobile Operator, VODACOM has established initiatives for call center accessibility to promote use of assistive technologies for inclusivity. There is a dedicated desk for deaf customers which give access to the call center services video call that allows them to communicate their issues using sign language. The company has invested in experts proficient in sign language who provide appropriate assistance. The company also has a dedicated desk for blind and visually impaired customers for call center services.

Digital infrastructure

Digital infrastructure development is one of the key priorities towards digital revolution with inclusivity. The are several projects to expand and enhance digital infrastructure across the country. The project includes the deployment of high-speed broadband networks to connect even the most remote areas, ensuring that every Tanzanian citizen has access to the opportunities presented by the digital age. The following are the milestones.

Fiber Optics Backbone and International Internet Bandwidth

The National Information Communication Technology Broadband Backbone (NICTBB) is regarded as critical infrastructure by the government of the URT. It is a strategic vehicle designed to make ICT infrastructure, services, and facilities accessible to the entire population for improved socioeconomic development and the creation of a knowledge-based society. The target is to extend the NICTBB to the district level with a total of 15,000km of the NICTBB by 2025. Currently the NICTBB has been extended to all regions [twenty-six

(26)] and forty-three (43) out of one hundred and thirty-nine (139) district headquarters. The project is ongoing to increase connection to ninety-nine (99) districts by June, 2024.

The NICTBB is connected to the three (3) international submarine cables that have landed in Dar es Salaam namely Eastern Africa Submarine System (EASSy), SEACOM and Seychelles to East Africa System (SEAS). The construction of the fourth submarine cable (2Africa) is underway and is expected to be operational in 2024. The 2Africa submarine cable is planned to be roughly 45,000 kilometers long and connect 33 countries.

The successful extension of deployment of this backbone network and underwater cables would enhance internet penetration. Increased connectivity levels will also encourage more competition on end user and interconnection rates, resulting in lower prices for internet services and more affordable internet services. Together, these initiatives will change Tanzania's economy and society into a knowledge economy and society.

The government has also attracted establishment of fiber optic cables manufacturing industries in URT whereby on 3rd December 2021, the fiber manufacturing company (Raddy fiber Manufacturing Ltd) was launched. The factory has the capacity to produce up to 24,000 km of optic fiber per year. In light of these developments, URT foresees the decrease of the cost per meter of optical fiber therefore enabling the whole country, East Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Africa to increase the pace of fiber optic internet infrastructure rollout. URT envisions to become a central supporting hub to support Africa in transformation towards internet-enabled economies.

The government also reduced the costs of obtaining permission to pass infrastructure on the road (Right of Way Charges), where previously service providers were required to pay a construction payment fee of 1000 US Dollars per one (1) kilometer and annual fee payment of 1000 US Dollars for one (1) kilometer. These costs were contributing to high operating costs. As of July 2023, the costs have reduced where by the construction fee payment has been reduced to 200 US Dollars and the annual payment has been reduced 100 US Dollars.

Tanzania Data Centre Infrastructure

Currently, URT has three (3) large data centers owned by Government and Private Sector. The government owns a state-of-art tier-3 National Data Centre which is connected to the National ICT broadband backbone linked to SEACOM and EASSy international submarine cables positioning Tanzania as strategic ICT hub for East Africa market and beyond. Other private sector communication and internet firms have also established state-of-art tier-3 Data Centre services in Tanzania leveraging the attractive investment environment that the government has provided in an aspiration to become an ICT hub which can drive digital transformation in the African region.

However, the country is driving more initiatives to increase the investment in datacenters especially with the emergence of technology such as AI and machine learning which fuels the surge in the demand for more computing power for their use cases and applications such as smart cities, autonomous vehicles, and industrial automation.

Mobile Broadband Infrastructure and Services

The Government opened up and assigned the 700 MHz (Digital Dividend II), 800 MHz (Digital Dividend I), 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz, 2600 MHz and 3500 MHz bands for use by International Mobile Telecommunication (IMT) which has enabled service providers to broaden the communication services in the country and allowed have investments in upgrading their mobile networks to pave way for new technologies such including 5G and the IoT.

The spectrum licensing framework has provided an environment that supports entry of new technologies, extension of the mobile network services and innovation in the country. The licensing of spectrum is technology and service neutral and they can be reformed for use by higher and efficient technologies such as 5G, the framework also allows radio frequency spectrum transferability through merger and acquisition of the licensed operators in the market, promotes passive and active infrastructure sharing (such as spectrum sharing) among the licensed operators and allows a free use of radio frequency spectrum resources on trial basis to innovators/researchers for Proof of Concept (POC).

The status of rollout of mobile broadband networks issued by December 2023 shows that the expansion of 3G and 4G coverage attained population coverage of 86% and 79% and geographical coverage of 70% and 63% respectively. For SIM card registration, as of December 2023, Tanzania had about 70.3 million active registered SIM Cards from a population of 61.7 million as per 2022 census. The overall penetration is 111%, meaning that there are 111 subscriptions per 100 population (people) in the URT by December 2023. The enhanced SIM card registration processes has also added SIM Card Registration procedures for visitors with age above 65 years or with defective fingerprints that experience challenges when capturing the biometric information.

Internet Exchange Points

There are currently six (6) IXPs in operation in the URT that facilitate efficient data exchange between internet service providers (ISPs), content delivery networks (CDNs), and other network operators within the country and reduce reliance on long-distance data transmission which has contributed to internet services affordability and usage growth. However, there is a need to add more efforts and increase the number of IXPs in the country as they play a vital role in strengthening the country's digital infrastructure, enhancing internet connectivity, and supporting the growth of the digital economy.

Traditional media

Finally, traditional media channels have long been the primary means of mass communication and advertising before the rise of digital media platforms and online technologies. Despite the growth of digital media, traditional media continue to play a significant role in the country in reaching diverse audiences, especially in regions with limited internet access or where print and broadcast media remain popular and widely consumed. Currently, there is one licensed public films providers the Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation (TBC), sixty-six (66) Television stations and two hundred and twenty-eight (228) Radio stations operating in the country.

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ARMENIA

Mr. Garegin Baghramyan
Chairman
Public Services Regulatory Commission

Question:

What were the successes registered by Armenia in the development of telecommunications infrastructure and what was the role of the National Regulatory Authority?

Public Services Regulatory Commission of the Republic of Armenia (PSRC of RA) is a multi-sector regulatory authority and has assumed the function of electronic communications sector regulation since 2006.

Until 2006, the telecommunications services market was in essence monopoly, there was 1 operator acting in the market - the incumbent operator with significant market power, with exclusive rights, and the functions of policy development and regulation of the sector were combined in the government by the Ministry, which also owned 10% of the shares of the incumbent operator.

Obviously, regulating the sector with such a model was problematic both from the point of view of conflicts of interest and regulatory risks, which is the most important thing for investors and businesses in any market, and had a negative impact on the development of the sector.

As a result of the implemented reforms, starting from 2006, with the creation of a regulatory authority, the sector was liberalized, which contributed to its rapid development, increased competition, increased investment and infrastructure development.

In this regard, as a result of the flexible and targeted regulatory policy pursued by PSRC of RA, tangible results in the development of the sector have been recorded.

Currently, there are 3 mobile operators and more than 200 Internet access service providers in the Republic of Armenia. 100% of RA settlements are ensured with 4G+ mobile coverage, of which about 92% have coverage of 2 operators and 22% of 3 operators, which includes about 76% of the population. 100% of settlements of the Republic of Armenia are ensured with fixed broadband Internet access services (wired and wireless technologies), including in 70% of settlements with fiber optic technology, which includes about 97% of the population.

PSRC of managed to achieve the development of the above infrastructure not only through liberalization and ensuring competition, but also through improving the business environment and simplifying the administration of permits and licensing obligations.

In particular, as a result of auctions for the provision of 800 MHz frequency bands, from the beginning PSRC od RA obliged one winning operator to ensure 4G+ coverage in 88% of RA settlements, and then the second winning operator to ensure coverage in all settlements which did not have 4G+ coverage.

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Based on the results of the fulfillment of the obligations provided by the permit issued within the framework of auctions conduced in 2022-2023 for the provision of the 700 MHz frequency band, 4G+ coverage of all 3 operators will be available in at least 80% of settlements, and 5G networks should be introduced in the capital and two large cities, mainly IoT technologies.

In 2023, as a result of the fulfillment of obligations provided as part of the renewal of the license of one of the operators, within 2 years the remaining 30% of settlements that do not have access to fiber optic technology will be provided with fixed broadband communications of wired fiber optic and/or qualitatively equivalent wireless technology, thus, as a result, broadband Internet connection using the specified technology will be available in all settlements of the Republic of Armenia.

To summarize, it should be noted that taking into account PSRC's regulation in the field of telecommunications, including in terms of infrastructure development, in the expert report of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) "G5 Benchmark" PSRC, as a collaborative and targeted regulator of telecommunications sector, received the highest rating of the 5th generation in the CIS region.

Currently, PSRC is actively working to ensure the continuous development of the sector, in particular, in terms of the development and application of regulations related to the development of 5G technology and the provision of radio frequency resources necessary to ensure the full implementation of 5G technology in the Republic of Armenia, as well as the development of broadband networks in connection with shared usage of infrastructure.

COLOMBIA

Ms. Lina María Duque Del Vecchio
Executive Director
Comisión de Regulación de Comunicaciones de Colombia

Question:

How can regulators gather sufficient information to make impactful decisions in regions that still lack connectivity?

Detailed and reliable information about the telecommunications landscape is a key input for making sound decisions regarding connectivity. Therefore, the lack of accurate information about remote and hard-to-reach areas that lack access to ICT, the specific needs of users in these areas, and the investments and infrastructure deployments made by operators hinders the implementation of effective public policies and strategic decision-making to close the digital divide.

The CRC plays a crucial role in collecting and analyzing information about the telecommunications sector. The information gathered allows the regulator and sector agents to continuously monitor progress in connectivity, evaluate the impact of implemented policies and regulatory measures, and advance the necessary projects to achieve goals. Additionally, by requesting detailed and thoroughly explained information, the regulator can identify areas with low competition where measures can be implemented to encourage the entry of new players and improve service offerings, benefiting users and helping to connect the unconnected.

GABON

Ms. Aline Minko Mi Etoua
Secretary General
Ministry of Digital Economy and New Information Technologies

Question:

According to the latest ITU ranking, Gabon is one of the most connected countries on the African continent and ranks first in Central Africa. Your country has a large fiber optic "Backbone" network connected to the three (3) border countries: Congo, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. What are the challenges facing the country in bridging its digital Divide, and what public policies are being put in place by Gabon to facilitate women's access to digital technology?

Madam Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU),

Mr. President of the Federal Council of Switzerland,

The Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),

Madam Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD),

The Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP),

Your Excellencies, Ministers, and Heads of Delegations,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Distinguished guests,

Before I begin my presentation on my country's commitment to the accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by harnessing the potential of information and communication technologies.

First of all, on behalf of the delegation accompanying me, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Organizers of this great event for the quality of the welcome that has been given to us and all the amenities that have been dedicated to us to make our stay on Swiss soil pleasant.

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May it also please the President of the 2024 Forum of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), His Excellency, Mr. Albert ROSTI to receive my warm and warm congratulations on his legitimate appointment as well as on all the members of his Bureau for the conduct of this Forum.

I would also like, on behalf of my country Gabon, to take a moment to express to all the co-organizers my admiration for having ensured, through the various Forums organized, a better follow-up of the implementation of the WSIS lines of action and for having also made it possible to open rich discussions on the role of ICTs as a means of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

To all my colleagues, Presidents and Chief Executive Officers of the Regulatory Authorities, Gabon asks you to receive its fraternal greetings and thanks you for your presence, which testifies to your commitment to support, through the permanent development of ICTs, our respective governments in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Ladies and gentlemen

Since August 30, 2023, Gabon has written a new page in its history by entering a new institutional era with the advent of the Committee for the Transition and Restoration of Institutions (CRTI), led by His Excellency Brigadier General Brigadier Brice Clotaire OLIGUI NGUEMA, President of the Transition, Head of State, President of the Republic.

Allow me to note that one of the significant events of the Transitional Committee for the Restoration of Institutions (CTRI), on the day of its seizure of power, was its decision to reactivate the internet networks that had been interrupted for several days. This desire led by Brigadier General Brice Clotaire OLIGUI NGUEMA already reflected the importance of the use of digital technology as a tool for social cohesion, development and communication on an international scale.

Under its guidance and vision, the Transitional Government of the Gabonese Republic has adopted the National Development Plan for the Transition 2024-2026, which defines the priority and strategic orientations whose objective is to "restore State institutions, consolidate inclusive and sustainable economic growth supported by more effective national governance by focusing on the development of human capital and infrastructure."

In this National Development Plan, it is essential to specify that digital technology is a decisive pillar for the diversification of the Gabonese economy in its dynamic of preparing for the post-oil era

Ladies and gentlemen

Gabon has made the Digital Economy a strategic lever for its economic and social growth.

Indeed, Gabon, a Member of the International Telecommunication Union since 29 June 1961, adheres to the lines of action of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) to build back better and accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular goal number 5 on ICTs and gender mainstreaming, by making Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are tools through which gender equality and women's empowerment can advance and are integral to the creation of societies in which women and men can contribute and participate substantially.

Since 2018, Gabon has declared a Women's Decade and launched a 50/50 gender balance challenge by integrating a gender equality perspective and using ICTs to accelerate progress towards gender equality. This effort is also part of an initiative to close the gender gap in ICTs to align with SDG Goal 5 "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls".

At the regulatory level, following the promulgation of the law on electronic communications, the law on electronic transactions, the law on the protection of personal data, and the law on cybersecurity and the fight against cybercrime, Gabon has adopted numerous laws in favour of the protection of women and gender parity in access to employment and social equality. My country has also just begun the process of ratifying the African Union Convention on Cybersecurity (Malabon Convention) and has finalized the ratification process establishing gender parity in political positions. This legal and regulatory framework is

essential to prevent the risks and challenges associated with technological innovation and to promote the integration of gender in ICTs.

Thus, in terms of connectivity, my country is continuing to deploy its national fiber optic backbone in order to interconnect all the localities of its national territory while multiplying cross-border interconnections with its neighboring countries. In this sense, the government has not only undertaken, in partnership with private individuals, the construction of submarine cables, linking Libreville and Port-Gentil, with a linear length of 200 kilometers, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the CAB4 project for a deployment of 1,628 kilometers of optical fiber, currently made available to economic operators ensuring interconnection with three border countries : the Republic of Congo, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of Cameroon.

By way of clarification, I am pleased to note that the current coverage rate of the population is around 95% in 3G/4G mobile technology, while access to fixed broadband via FTTH technology has been multiplied by 5 in 6 years.

These performances have been made possible thanks to the actions of the Gabonese government, including :

- The technology-neutral licensing of mobile operators in the sector.

- Opening up the wired internet access market segment to competition.

- The abundance of international connectivity by landing three cables

Submarines

To address connectivity gaps in rural areas, Gabon has implemented a universal service to address the needs of the rural population living in areas without any mobile coverage.

In order to enhance the infrastructure currently being deployed, the Government has embarked on a vast project to digitize the Gabonese administration with the establishment of a secure data storage center.

Indeed, our country has the ambition to fully digitize its administrative services. Several public services are operational such as the e-visa for immigration services, the e-tax for taxes, the e-balance in the management of civil servants' pay, e-education, vectis for the state budget services or asycuda for customs services, etc. These few examples show Gabon's desire to put digital technology at the heart of its development strategy.

Finally, to boost its digital transformation, Gabon has set up an innovation and acceleration center around digital incubators, for the training of young people and women with a view to supporting them in the creation of innovative startups, which promotes the emergence and development of a digital ecosystem, favorable to job creation in our country.

Ladies and gentlemen

Gabon's presence at this forum shows its anchoring in the information society.

To reaffirm and demonstrate its commitment to participate in the connection of Africa and its integration into a more global world, Gabon is actively participating with the private sector in several ambitious investment programs under way, through the integration of Central African countries within the framework of the "Central Africa Backbone" (BAC) project, the "Single African Network" (RUA), Free Roaming in the CEMAC zone and the SMART AFRICA Alliance, which currently has 39 member states, of which Gabon is one of the founding members.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To conclude my remarks, I wish every success to the work of the 2024 Forum of the World Summit on the Information Society.

Thank you.

The ATLANTIC COUNCIL

Ms. Rose Jackson
Director, Tech and Democracy Initiative

Question:

We have been discussing the connectivity gap for well over a decade now. What do you think the global community addressing this challenge is missing and who is best placed to make progress in connecting the unconnected?

When discussing connectivity, we often include the word "meaningful." That is because not all connectivity is equal. Who is connected, how they are connected, and whether that connection is financially and technically sustainable matters a great deal. Whether people can leverage that connectivity to speak and organize freely, collaborate, and make use of the internet to build businesses, share ideas, and interact with the world also determines how "meaningful" their connectivity is.

According to the ITU, we have made significant progress in connecting the unconnected. Nearly five and half billion people around the world are estimated to have access to the internet. And while that's an astounding number of humans potentially in contact with one another each day, this still leaves about 33 percent of the world cut off from an increasingly central mechanism for modern life. As troubling as that number may seem, it does not tell the whole story. Focusing our conversation on connectivity with and about countries misses much of the picture, and limits our options for brining truly meaningful connectivity to the rest of the world.

The power of the internet is its distributed nature. The infrastructure underpinning it is purpose built to enable collaboration, exchange of knowledge, and the free flow of information across all sorts of boundaries–be they national, political, demographic, or otherwise. The immense resulting benefits to society depend on this open nature and spirit of experimentation. Given that, the questions we should be asking are not about national-level statistic, but returning to the who and how. In taking a closer look at the 33 percent figure, while women account for roughly half of the global population, they outnumber male non-Internet users by 17 per cent, up from 11 percent in 2019. When those women do come online they are often met with disproportionate harassment and targeting, particularly when they seek to run for office or take leadership roles in public life.

Even when looking at the five and half billion that do have internet access, Freedom House estimates that only 17 percent live in countries with the ability to leverage that internet freely. Based on Freedom House's research, ITU statistics, and other data, we estimate that approximately 40% of the global population lives in countries whose governments restrict their access to information and ability to express themselves as a matter of policy. These government policies exist on a spectrum and can include censorship, surveillance

content manipulation, and extralegal harassment against internet users (including in some cases imprisonment or death). The governments of China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Myanmar sit on the far end of this spectrum, but many other governments employ similar tactics at smaller scale. Freedom House estimates that 46 percent of the online public live in countries where authorities disconnected internet or mobile networks, often for political reasons.

So, when we talk about connecting the unconnected, we would be making a mistake to pretend doing so is a values-neutral endeavor. To preserve what is good about the internet, while bringing more people into that space, and addressing long standing issues with affordability, access, and ownership, we can chart a path that takes advantage of all we have learned over the last two decades. It is worth noting that much of that learning has come through this very forum and the WSIS action lines on which we collaborate.

To make real progress we cannot simply hope that companies will fill these gaps, and must face the reality that dominance of any single company or country's technology inevitably leads to extractive and problematic dynamics. Connectivity is the definition of a multistakeholder challenge. We have to get creative in leveraging what each sector has to bring to the table; working with communities to identify their needs and set the rules for their own access; governments offering financing incentives, blended resourcing, and collaborations with small and medium size industry players to provide the resources required to connect communities on their terms; basic protections for internet users ensuring that human rights can be secured online, particularly when it comes to data protection and privacy; open protocols and standards that ensure those newly online can connect to the world safely and reliably; and a recommitment to the distributed internet through which no government can dictate the rules for everyone else.

Though some want to suggest that connectivity and human rights are separate topics, they are inextricably linked. The Global Digital Compact that countries are in the midst of negotiating has demonstrated just how much thirst there is to make progress together on these issues. I hope we can build on that momentum at the Internet Governance Forum and next year's WSIS+20 forum so that more of the world becomes meaningfully connected.

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Leaders TalkX: Gateway to Knowledge: Empowering Global Access Through Digital

Recording: https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/378

Moderated by High-level Track Facilitator:
Ms. Lori Schulman, Senior Director, Internet Policy, International Trademark Association (INTA)

UN Representative:
Dr. Tawfik Jelassi, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Speakers:

1. **Cuba:** H.E. Ms. Mayra Arevich Marín, Minister, Ministry of Communication
2. **Iraq:** H.E. Dr. Hayam Al-yasiri, Minister, Minister, Ministry of Communications
3. **Brunei Darussalam:** Mr. Ir Haji Jailani bin Haji Buntar, Chief Executive, Authority for Info-communications Technology Industry
4. **Costa Rica:** Ms. Cinthya Arias Leitón, President of the Board, Superintendencia de Telecomunicaciones (SUTEL)
5. **Estonia:** Ms. Nele Leosk, Ambassador-at-Large for Digital Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
6. **Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC):** Mr. AHM Bazlur Rahman, Chief Executive Office

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Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator

Introduction

This session highlighted that access to information is not only about connectivity but the integrity and reliability of the information we receive online. The United Nations Representative set the context for the session by describing the current state of inequality in access and usage of the internet. The divides are particularly noticeable among men and women and urban and rural users. Women outnumber mail non-users by 17%. And urban users greatly outnumber rural users. 81% of Urban users have access to the internet. Rural users do not.

Challenges

The issues of access are not limited to technical access. There are issues of language barriers and the quality of information that is found online. There are 10 Languages used on the Internet although globally there are over 7,000 languages. This is of particular concern given that the UN General Assembly has declared 2022-2032 the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. Further, the issue of misinformation is a key component of ensuring reliable access to knowledge.

Case Examples

Cuba responded by affirming that ICTs are the catalyst for social and political equality. Safe Access must be a priority of Government. There is increasing access to the Internet for personal and professional development. Cuba has made significant headway despite the limitations and challenges created by the Blockade. Cuba seeks to ensure accessibility to all in the digital space on a nondiscriminatory basis. It has established a center for intermediation for persons with disabilities so that all persons can be at the center of the country's digital transformation. Cuba seeks to create a more egalitarian society online.

Iraq's efforts have yielded a high number of Wi-fi users through the implementation of fiber optic chains, employing submarine cables and investing in connectivity infrastructure for others through Iraq. As a result, 3.5 million homes have fiber optics. Iraq is implementing licenses for 4G and 5G. They are promoting home use of 4G and other connectivity measures. Iraq has also implemented an electronic national identity program tied to electronic visas. All ministries have implemented and support a government network that allows internet access and affords free internet access to certain schools through public-private sector partnerships. 6000 official departments are now networked. Iraq has requested that the ITU focus on content on the internet as well as infrastructure. The issue of social media and respecting local society ethics is a big challenge for Iraq.

The Authority for Info-communications Technology Industry (AITI) **Brunei-Darussalam** noted that reliability of data continues to build trust and confidence in the digital world. Therefore, Brunei Darussalam is adopting Data Protection Directive for the use and processing of data by private sector and transfer across borders. Brunei-Darussalam continues its awareness and capacity building
programs in this space. Cybersecurity Brunei has been established to address cybercrimes. Brunei Darussalam has committed to align with the Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT) 700 MHz band plan.

Access to information is one of main prerequisites to building a digital state and **Estonia** has been working on access to information laws for the last 25 years. Estonia adopted legislation for government institutions

to have websites and provide basic information. This legislation includes institutions like schools as well as government authorities. The challenge now is how should the Government manage personal data. There is also increasing reliance on AI in the provision of Government Services. Estonia is currently working on governmental chatbots and information services. This includes increasing public awareness of these services. Estonia is also providing global contributions in raising awareness as well.

Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) has been continuously engaged in the WSIS action lines since 2006. Action lines C1 – C11 have contributed to digital infrastructure and inclusivity. Global dynamics and global corporations create roadblocks to cultural consumerism, unsustainable and isolated interests. Civil rights in digital world being eroded by disinformation, misinformation, fake news and hate speech. Ownership concentrated and access limited to those who can pay for services. Important to promote diversity and cultures, licensing of copyrighted material, open-source software and content and a public digital infrastructure.

Costa Rica is focused on 5G implementation in rural areas. There is a first draft of a public enquiry document includes obligations to the winning bidder to focus on development of infrastructure in 134 high priority districts that currently have little to no connectivity. Information is a tool. Greater emphasis is being placed on Information Companies. Costa Rica is part of the Freedom Online Coalition of Governments (FOC). The FOC seeks to ensure that the challenges and opportunities relating to Internet freedom and digital technologies are on the policy agenda to drive concrete policy changes and outcomes, shape global norms to promote a rules-based, democratic, and inclusive world where human rights and fundamental freedoms are upheld in online and digital contexts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the issues of physical infrastructure, equal access, quality of data, quality of content, language and social barriers are challenges that governments, the private sector, and NGOs encounter as technology accelerates. While we have a long way to go, the panel's interventions demonstrates that we have come a long way in providing gateways to knowledge at the local and global levels. The message is positive despite the continuing challenges.

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CUBA

H.E. Ms. Mayra Arevich Marín
Minister
Ministry of Communications

Question:

What actions are implemented in Cuba to improve ICT accessibility?

Dear Friends:

Information and Communication Technologies constitute a catalyst for economic, political and social development. They act as a transversal axis empowering the multiple processes of society, guaranteeing their universal and secure access, must be a priority for our governments.

In Cuba, we have identified three priority actions to achieve access to ICTs: the creation of digital skills and competencies; promoting the right to inclusive access to technologies for professional and personal growth; and developing, in the midst of the difficulties we face, telecommunications infrastructure, ensuring the security and quality of services provided to the population.

Despite the existing limitations, Cuba is moving forward in the process of digital transformation, and aspires with the cooperation of all parties to build a digital future, where science and innovation; social communication and digital transformation, prevail as basic pillars to achieve these achievements.

For Cuba, digital inclusion is more than a necessity, it is a duty and commitment to ALL. The humanist essence of the Revolution is not limited to the physical scenario, it also transcends the virtual scenario where passion, resistance and solidarity have a unique and altruistic expression.

Our Magna Carta establishes the equality of all people without any discrimination based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnic origin, skin color, religious belief, disability, national origin or any other distinction detrimental to human dignity. Therefore, promoting the digital inclusion of society in Cuba is an imperative.

There are many actions that we can mention, for example, the telecommunications operator of Cuba, conducts workshops with the participation of people with some kind of disability and as a result initiatives have emerged as:

- Intermediation Center for people with hearing disabilities.
- Establishment of differentiated rates for people with disabilities and low-income people.
- Enabling accessibility functionalities from mobile devices.
- The establishment of accessibility requirements for the design of platforms and applications.

On the other hand, the Union of Computer Scientists of Cuba, a civil society organization, promotes projects that place people at the center of digital transformation, trains and develops applications with sign language interpretation for teaching history and preserving cultural heritage.

The Youth Computer Clubs, a network of 642 centers that have trained more than 5 million cubans, develop digital tools and platforms to promote the welfare of people with disabilities and the elderly. Recently, they have linked the teaching of robotics to the interest of children with autism in the use of ICTs.

Similarly, the development of telecommunications infrastructure is a priority for the Cuban government, currently reaching the figure of 7.7 million cell phone subscribers and more than 80% of the population is connected to the Internet, a figure above the world average.

These achievements have been attained despite the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the U.S. government against Cuba, which limits our access to digital platforms with worldwide access, to technological equipment containing more than 10% of components of U.S. origin, as well as to sources of financing, due to Cuba's inclusion in the spurious list of alleged countries that sponsor terrorism.

IRAQ

H.E. Dr. Hayam Al-yasiri
Minister
Ministry of Communications

Question:

What are the major steps that are taken by the Iraqi government to bridge the digital gap in Iraq?

Distinguished delegates

I am honored to be here and I will review the achievements and successes accomplished in Iraq in the communications sector in general and the areas of digital transformation in particular.

The Iraqi Ministry of Communications took a number of rapid measures to reduce the digital gap by improving the infrastructure, as the Ministry succeeded in laying thousands of kilometers of fiber-optic cables and activating three of the main submarine cables to feed the Internet. The significant increase in the number of users of FTTH technology as we currently have approximately three and a half million lines with this technology, that is, a three-fold increase in one year, in addition to four million subscribers via wireless technology. It is worth mentioning that there are currently three mobile phone licenses that operate with 4G technology and a national license that will operate with 5G technology. In addition, there are currently many transit projects, as the geographical location of Iraq brings promising opportunities in the field of transit.

In the areas of digital transformation, what has been achieved on the ground was reviewed, as nearly six-hundreds sites were established to link government sites to secure the infrastructure for digital transformation, and there are more than 6,000 sites under construction. In addition to creating hundreds of applications for electronic services, including approximately 1,400 free services on the UR government platform, and other government service projects such as the national card, the electronic passport, and the electronic visa, which have become available to everyone, and work is also underway to provide free internet to about a thousand model schools. In the field of artificial intelligence, Iraq has recently initiated some measures represented by forming a committee to develop artificial intelligence policies and strategies. It has also begun preparing a draft law on artificial intelligence.

It was also noted that there will be efforts by international organizations to establish basic principles that will be an umbrella for the countries of the world, and in parallel there will be local laws and regulations for each country that take into account its specificity and its societal, cultural and religious nature. In this regard, we believe that it is necessary for efforts to be parallel between countries and not to leave

developing countries behind at the back. Also, we should mention that the concerns raised by most of the countries that the efforts of governments cannot precede the efforts of the private sector, which is primarily concerned with financial interests, while countries worry about the ethics of artificial intelligence and the danger of it affecting the morals, cultures, and religions of societies. We have a message to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to take appropriate measures to oblige social media companies to respect the cultures and religions of people and not to adopt this absolute openness in social media, which is a challenge we face in Iraq, due to the lack of sufficient cooperation of these

companies in this field.

At the end, I wish every success to the work of this Forum.

Thank you for your attention.

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

Mr. Ir Haji Jailani bin Haji Buntar
Chief Executive
Authority for Info-communications Technology Industry

Question:

Strengthening the trust framework through data protection laws is a pre-requisite for the development of an accessible Information Society. What are the efforts which Brunei Darussalam have taken to enhance the security and protection of data and privacy in order to build confidence amongst users of ICT?

With the exponential growth in data and computing power fueling the advancement of data-driven technologies, data protection remains to play a crucial role in building trust within an accessible Information Society. As we envision a Smart Connected Nation, where large volumes of personal data may be generally captured, these activities open its doors to potential risks in the security and protection of data. It thereby highlights the importance of having a law in place to regulate the processing of personal data. Brunei Darussalam is looking into this seriously and looking at the best practice being implemented regionally and internationally.

The Authority of Info-communications Technology Industry of Brunei Darussalam, together with Attorney General Chambers of Brunei Darussalam, have been developing and will be introducing Personal Data Protection Law for Brunei Darussalam. It will set out a general data protection framework which will apply to private sector organisations in Brunei Darussalam. The rationale is to provide the protection of individuals' (such as users of ICT) personal data that are collected, used, disclosed and processed by private sector organisations. In addition, it will aim to recognise mechanisms which aim to facilitate the safe use and transfer of personal data across borders.

AITI has already begun its' efforts in conducting awareness to private sector organisations and the public in the topics relating to Basic PDP principles, the upcoming law, as well as regional guidelines such as the ASEAN Data Management Framework and ASEAN Model Contractual Clauses (MCCs). This year, AITI has plans to build the competencies of Data Protection Officers of private sector organisations and our hope is to instill the culture of 'Accountability' of managing personal data amongst such organisations. With the upcoming law, we envision that the private sector organisations collecting, using, disclosing and processing personal data will take into account of the requirements on implementing data protection policies and practices and in turn build confidence amongst its' users.

As part of safeguarding in the digital space the citizens of Brunei Darussalam, there are also efforts by other organisations in Brunei Darussalam to build confidence amongst ICT users. This includes the establishment of a separate entity called the 'Cyber Security Brunei (CSB),' responsible for monitoring and coordinating national efforts in addressing cyber security threats and cybercrime.

COSTA RICA

Ms. Cinthya Arias Leitón
President of the Board
Superintendencia de Telecomunicaciones (SUTEL)

Question:

The new technologies appear in the world to change our life frequently. For example, fifth-generation networks emerge to improve the quality of service for telecommunications users and promote that population can have access to the benefits of the information and knowledge society without any discrimination. In this sense, what actions are you promoting to reduce the digital divide and contribute to the digital development of your country through 5G networks and sectorial alliances?

The Superintendency of Telecommunications [SUTEL] of Costa Rica is highly committed, and has been taking the necessary measures, to promote inclusiveness, the right to access information, and the knowledge required to reduce inequality and foster alliances with the purpose of contributing to two specific Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] of the United Nations [UN].

The regulatory body has advocated for the benefits of emerging technologies to be in the interest of all users, and within the framework of a collaborative regulation that is inclusive of the largest possible number of agents and stakeholders in the telecommunications sector.

During the process of implementing fifth generation technology [5G] in Costa Rica, SUTEL has sought to adhere to the public policy guidelines established by the Ministry of Science, Innovation, Technology and Telecommunications [MICITT as per its Spanish acronym], in its capacity as governing body, and has been taking measures to bridge the digital divide in the country, thereby ensuring that the populations residing in rural areas have access to a wider variety, and a better quality, of telecommunication services in the near future.

Prioritization of the 700 MHz band used in 5G deployments

To properly deploy 5G technology, it is essential that the telecom operators within the national territory have access to all the different types of available radio frequency bands, including low frequency (below 1 GHz), middle frequency (between 1 GHz and 6 GHz), and high frequency bands (above 6 GHz).

Notwithstanding the above, the utilization of the 700 MHz radio frequency band, during the deployment of International Mobile Telecommunications [IMT] systems, has significant advantages with regard to bridging the digital divide. One such advantage is that it would allow for the development of telecommunications infrastructure at a lower cost and, at the same time, shorten the time it takes to properly deploy a network. This would help bridge the digital divide and promote a wider variety, and a better quality, of mobile services in rural areas across the country.

As such, the 700 MHz band was made available in Costa Rica for the deployment of IMT systems in accordance with the current National Frequency Allocation Plan [PNAF as per its Spanish acronym].

The 700 MHz band is the third most used band by mobile operators across the globe to test or deploy 5G networks, and the frequency band with the fifth highest number of end-users, according to the Global System for Mobile Communications [GSMA].

The 700 MHz band and the 5G bidding process

In pursuance with the General Telecommunications Act of Costa Rica [Act No. 8642], SUTEL shall be responsible, after first conducting all the necessary studies, for the 5G bidding process in accordance with the National Telecommunications Development Plan [PNDT as per its Spanish acronym] and the sector's relevant policies.

Therefore, following the instructions issued by the MICITT via Executive Agreement No. 031-2023-TEL-MICITT, SUTEL developed a set of conditions based on the provisions established by the governing body, with regard to the public bidding process required to allocate Costa Rica's radio spectrum and deploy 5G in the country, which includes, of particular note, the 700 MHz band; to wit:

"Guidelines and conditions for the allocation of the 700 MHz band should be developed to promote network deployment in urban and rural areas, and improve access to telecommunication services in areas that have little to no connectivity (i.e.: partial or limited coverage) [...]"

A first draft of the Invitation to Bid [ITB] document was submitted to the public inquiry process, wherein the obligations of the 700 MHz radio frequency band winning bidders are established. These include the need to focus on the development of IMT networks in the high-priority districts specified in the PNDT, which covers areas that have little to no connectivity across the country. Additionally, end-user experience conditions were defined by establishing minimum speed requirements (the actual speed experienced by the end user).

By adopting this measure, the regulatory body seeks to prioritize the deployment of infrastructure over revenue collection, so that the inhabitants of the 134 high-priority districts identified in public policies perceive a substantial improvement in the coverage and the number of available services and, therefore, a reduction of the digital divide as a result of 5G network deployment.

These districts have the least level of access to telecommunication services and require this investment to enjoy the same benefits and technological advances available to end users on the other side of the digital divide. The actions of SUTEL specified above will shorten the time required for the telecommunication services to reach these high-priority locations.

ESTONIA

Ms. Nele Leosk
Ambassador-at-Large for Digital Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Question:

What have you done in Estonia, and globally, to guarantee that everyone has equal access to public information online? What are the main challenges?

[MISSING STATEMENT]

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BANGLADESH NGOS NETWORK FOR RADIO AND COMMUNICATION (BNNRC)

Mr. AHM Bazlur Rahman
Chief Executive Officer

Question:

What is Progress, Challenges, and Way forward for Sharing and strengthening knowledge: Bangladesh and Regional Context?

Hon'ble Madam Moderator, Distinguished Speakers and Participants,

I am honored to deliver this intervention on behalf of the Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication, Bangladesh Internet Governance Forum, and Bangladesh Initiative for Unified Voices on Global Digital Compact and UN Summit of the Future 2024.

At the outset, I thank the Moderator, Madam Lori, for convening this thematic Leaders TalkX about the Gateway to Knowledge: Empowering Global Access Through Digital.

We have been involved with the WSIS process since 2002, implementing WSIS action line C1-C11 in 2006 in Bangladesh.

Madam Moderator,

It is time to reinforce Global Access Through Digital as a Basic Human Right, Not Just a Privilege. It should be included in every state constitution, such as the Global Access Through Digital as a Basic Human Right.

Madam Moderator,

What do we mean about Gateway to Knowledge: Empowering Global Access Through Digital the following way:

A right to participate in Global Access Through Digital one's own culture and use one's mother language, including ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities;

A right to information regarding governance and matters of public interest (freedom of information) in terms of Global Access Through Digital

A right to one's honor and reputation and protection against unwarranted damage to them in terms of A right to privacy and a right to peaceful assembly and association.

Madam Moderator,

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Since 2006, WSIS Action line C1-C11 has contributed to the following four sectors for achieving.

Communicating in Public Sphere:

Communicating Knowledge:

Civil Rights in Communication:

Cultural Rights in Communication:

Madam Moderator,

Global dynamics have created a roadblock to the Gateway to Knowledge: Empowering Global Access Through Digital.

- a few global corporations now dominate Most Mass media and social media platforms. Mass media play a growing role in identity formation and cultural processes, but these are shifting towards an unsustainable individualist and consumerist ethos, like me-me-me society!
- The ongoing extension of copyright duration and stiffer enforcement in the digital area is impeding communication and use of knowledge, and the public domain is shrinking.
- Access to ICTs and their use to tackle poverty and exclusion has almost ground to a halt under neo-liberal policies. Under the pretext of a "war on terrorism," civil rights in the digital environment are being severely eroded through misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation.

The fruits of human creativity – from academia to media, from indigenous medicines to music – are privatized, ownership concentrated into the hands of a few, and access restricted to those who can pay.

Madam Moderator,

Improving knowledge and capacity about Empowering Global Access Through Digital is very important. Gateway to Knowledge: Empowering Global Access Through Digital should ensure the Right to Culture and Access to Knowledge in the following manner.

Diversity of language and Cultures 2. Right to use one's Language 3. Freedom from restrictions of access to knowledge by licensing and copyrights 4. Knowledge commons and the public domain 5. Free/ Open-Source software and Open standard 6. Equality of access 7. Right to Consumer Protection on the Internet 8. Right to legal Remedy 9. Right to Use of Use of Encryption and 10. Minimum Standards on Use of Personal Data.

Strengthening the public domain, ensuring that information and knowledge are readily available for human development and not locked up in private hands;

Ensuring affordable access to and effective use of electronic networks like digital public infrastructure (DPI) in a development context, for instance, by innovative & robust regulation and public investment.

Securing and extending the global commons, for both broadcast & telecommunication, to ensure this public resource is not sold for private ends.

Leaders TalkX: Bridging the Skills Gap: Building Capacity for the Digital Age

Recording: https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/462

Moderated by High-level Track Facilitator:
Dr. Konstantinos Komaitis, Resident Senior Fellow, Global and Democratic Governance, DFRLab, The Atlantic Council

UN Representative:
Ms. Susan Teltscher, Head of the Capacity and Digital Skills Development Division
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Speakers:

1. **Burundi:** H.E. Ms. Léocadie Ndacayisaba, Minister, Ministère de la Communication, des Technologies de l'Information et des Médias
2. **Cambodia:** H.E. Dr. Makara Khov, Secretary of State, Ministry of Post and Telecommunications
3. **Lithuania:** Ms. Jūratė Šovienė, Chair, Communications Regulatory Authority of the Republic of Lithuania
4. **Nigeria:** Dr. Aminu Maida, Executive Vice Chairman, Nigerian Communications Commission
5. **Zimbabwe:** Dr. Gift Kallisto Machengete, Director General, Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe
6. **Global Satellite Operators Association (GSOA)**: Ms. Isabelle Mauro, Director General

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Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator

There is imperative to ensure universal access to ICT skills and literacy for all individuals. We should emphasize the need for domestic policies integrating ICTs into education and lifelong learning, eradicating illiteracy through ICT programs and promoting e-literacy skills. Additionally, it is important to highlight initiatives to empower disadvantaged groups, address gender disparities in ICT education, and enhance local communities' capacity in ICT use. The discussion about ensuring that people are digitally literal also underscores the importance of regional and international cooperation in capacity building efforts and the role of volunteering in promoting ICT skills development.

Ensuring that every citizen has the required digital skills to actively and equitably participate in the digital economy is critical for the advancement of societies. There is an urgency in creating such capacity in order to bridge the existing divides. To do so, the infrastructure supporting communication technologies should be robust and resilient as well as affordable.

As the world looks towards 2030, it is imperative to accelerate programs and policies that provide the necessary initiatives for citizens to actively participate in digital skill development. For the past twenty years, the WSIS Action Lines have been a compass towards achieving the ambitious goals that were set in 2003. The fact that we are now able to address the divides related to digital skills is because of the vision and commitment of WSIS. As we move forward with the Summit for the Future, as well as next year's WSIS+20 Review, it is important to remember the role that WSIS has played.

The renewed discussion about technology and development is creating a challenge on how to ensure that WSIS remains relevant. It also presents us with an opportunity to demonstrate not only its relevance but also its agility in adapting to the new digital realities.

Two priorities were identified:

• Cross-government and cross-stakeholder collaboration: bridging the divide on digital skills is not

the job of one entity – it is a collective responsibility.

• Policy measures: governments should be enacting policy measures that seek to incentivise and

create the conditions for people to want to participate. Education should start early on.

The renewed interest in the way technology facilitates development has presented both opportunities and challenges. Challenges include issues of infrastructure and, in particular, how robust the infrastructure supporting communication should be. Another challenge has to do with aligning under a coherent policy the various objectives to address issues of divide.

Both these challenges however present opportunities. The main thing is for policy makers to ensure they enact policies that provide the necessary incentives and are based on collaboration. They also need to view issues of divide more holistically and address such issues like infrastructure security.

Links to WSIS Action Lines and Sustainable Development Goals

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities

for all.

Related Action Lines:

• C3: Access to information knowledge

- C4: Capacity building
- C5: Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs
- C6: Enabling environment
- C7 ICT Applications
- C8: Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content
- C10: Ethical dimensions of the Information Society

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Related Action Lines:

- C2: Information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for the information society
- C3: Access to information knowledge
- C5: Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs
- C6: Enabling environment
- C7 ICT Applications
- C8: Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content
- C10: Ethical dimensions of the Information Society

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.

Related Action Lines:

- C2: Information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for the information society
- C3: Access to information knowledge
- C5: Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs
- C6: Enabling environment
- C7 ICT Applications
- C8: Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content
- C9: Media
- C10: Ethical dimensions of the Information Society

Case Examples

ITU/UNESCO: Giga Project

Lithuania: No One is Left Behind

Nigeria Communications Commission (NCC): Critical National Infrastructure Project

Cambodia: Digital Skill Development Roadmap 2024-2035

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BURUNDI

H.E. Ms. Léocadie NDACAYISABA
Minister
Ministère de la Communication des Technologies de l'information et des Médias

Question:

How does the Government of Burundi plan to promote female leadership and close the skills gap in the digital age, particularly in the area of ICT?

Excellences, Madame la Secrétaire Générale de l'UIT, Madame Doreen Bogdan-Martin ;

Excellence, Monsieur le Secrétaire Général Adjoint de l'Union Internationale des Télécommunications (UIT), Monsieur Tomas Lamanauskas ;

Excellence, Monsieur Thomas Schneider, Ambassadeur et Directeur des Affaires Internationales à l'Office Fédéral de la Communication (OFCOM) ;

Monsieur le Directeur du Bureau de Développement des Télécommunications de l'UIT, Monsieur Dr Cosmas Zavazava ;

Monsieur le Directeur du Bureau des Radiocommunications de l'Union Internationale des Télécommunications (UIT), Monsieur Mario Maniewicz ;

Monsieur le Directeur du Bureau de Normalisation des Télécommunications de l'Union Internationale des Télécommunications (UIT), Monsieur Seizo Onoe ;

Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs les Ministres ;

Mesdames et Messieurs, Distingués Participants ;

En cette solennelle occasion, je saisis l'opportunité de remercier le Tout-Puissant pour nous avoir permis de prendre part à ces assises de haut niveau du Sommet Mondial sur la Société de l'Information aux niveaux régional et international, ainsi qu'au Sommet Mondial sur l'Intelligence Artificielle au service du Bien Social.

Il y a de cela deux décennies, le Sommet Mondial sur la Société de l'Information (SMSI) fut établi afin de fournir un cadre propice à la collaboration mondiale dans le domaine numérique, lors de ses deux phases successives à Genève en 2003 et à Tunis en 2005. Notre objectif était alors de bâtir des sociétés de l'information et du savoir, humaines, inclusives et axées sur le développement.

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Cette assemblée constitue pour nous une opportunité de débats multi-parties prenantes et un catalyseur pour l'émergence d'initiatives visant à dresser un bilan des résultats obtenus, des tendances majeures et des défis rencontrés depuis l'adoption du Plan d'Action de Genève en 2003.

Le Burundi, se joignant à la communauté internationale, œuvre à la mise en œuvre des axes d'action du SMSI aux échelles régionale et internationale pour le développement socio-économique durable.

Permettez-moi de relayer l'appel lancé par le Secrétaire Général de l'Union Africaine des Télécommunications lors du Sommet Mondial de l'UIT sur le Forum de la Société de l'Information 2023 à Genève, exhortant au déploiement urgent d'infrastructures numériques modernes, à une connectivité améliorée dans les zones rurales et à l'adoption universelle de l'identification numérique. Pour atteindre ces objectifs, nous devons unir nos forces, secteurs public et privé, pour accélérer les progrès dans des domaines cruciaux tels que la santé, l'éducation, l'action climatique, l'innovation et les infrastructures à large bande.

Mesdames et Messieurs, Distingués Participants ;

Récemment, le Burundi a célébré la Journée Mondiale des Télécommunications et de la Société de l'Information le 17 mai 2024, soulignant le potentiel transformateur de l'innovation numérique pour le bien-être de nos citoyens et réaffirmant notre engagement envers une utilisation inclusive du numérique pour concrétiser notre Plan National de Développement et atteindre la vision du Burundi émergent à l'horizon 2040 et développé en 2060.

Le Gouvernement du Burundi a revu son Plan National de Développement pour moderniser l'État, élargir l'accès aux services numériques et promouvoir la transparence. Nous avons investi dans les infrastructures numériques, notamment la fibre optique, et mis en place un cadre juridique pour le Fonds de Service Universel, démontrant notre volonté de connecter les zones les plus reculées.

Cependant, des défis persistent, notamment en matière d'accès à l'Internet haut débit et de financement du numérique. Nous nous engageons à renforcer les partenariats publics-privés pour rendre le numérique accessible à tous, en particulier aux communautés les plus vulnérables. Nous prévoyons également d'organiser annuellement un salon numérique dédié aux innovations TIC, en collaboration avec l'UIT et ses partenaires.

Mesdames et Messieurs, Distingués Participants ;

Le Burundi se réjouit des progrès réalisés dans la mise en œuvre du SMSI, grâce notamment au Forum du SMSI et au Groupe des Nations Unies sur la Société de l'Information, qui sont des exemples remarquables de collaboration numérique pour le bien social. Nous saluons le rôle crucial de l'UIT dans la facilitation et la mise en œuvre des résultats du SMSI et des ODD, et nous réaffirmons notre engagement à contribuer activement à ces efforts.

En conclusion, je tiens à exprimer ma gratitude pour l'organisation de cette table ronde ministérielle et pour le travail accompli. Nous sommes reconnaissants envers nos partenaires pour leur engagement soutenu.

Sur ce, que Je termine mon mot en souhaitant :

Que Vive la République du Burundi.

Que Vive la coopération entre le Burundi et l'Union Internationale des Télécommunications.

Que Vive le partenariat et la coopération entre le Burundi et ses partenaires au développement.

Que Vive la coopération entre le Gouvernement du Burundi et les acteurs du secteur des télécommunications et fournisseurs de services numériques.

Que Dieu vous bénisse. Je vous remercie.

CAMBODIA

H.E. Dr. Makara Khov
Secretary of State
Ministry of Post and Telecommunications

Question:

Based on Cambodia's experience on digital skill development, have you identified any future key-challenges? What are possible policy measures that can contribute to address those challenges in order to promote universal digital education?

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has adopted "Cambodia Digital Economy and Society Policy Framework 2021-2035" and "Cambodia Digital Government Policy 2022-2035" with clear vision to move Cambodia toward digital economy and society by 2035 through building digital government, digital business and digital citizen.

In this regards, the RGC has been focusing on building key-enablers including trust, human capital and digital infrastructure in order to enhance favorable environment for digital innovation and inclusiveness.

Among challenges that Cambodia faces in its journey to digital economy and society, digital skill shortages related to evolving gap between skills demand and supply is crucial. This key challenge is due to three main factors: (1) Diversity of current digital capacity of stakeholders (including government, business and citizen), (2) Fast evolving of digital technology (such as Artificial Intelligence and Data Science), and (3) Requirement for big investment on capacity building and jobs creation.

To address the above mentioned problem, firstly, RGC has adopted Digital Skill Development Roadmap 2024-2035 in February 2024. Cambodia has set clear objective on digital human capital building by 2035 with a list of priority actions following multiple consultations with higher education institutions, government institutions, private companies, development partners and civil society.

Secondly, a comprehensive digital skill competency framework will be developed in order to provide the common understanding on digital skill sets and skill proficiency levels required for career tracks in digital sector. This will be served as common framework that assists (1) students to have better understanding in choosing their majors, (2) higher education institutions to better prepare and improve curriculum, and (3) private companies and public institutions to better address skill shortages and human resources retention issues.

Finally, key policy measures have been concretely implementing aiming at providing support for (1) creation of convergence training programs that are flexible and adaptive to cross traditional academic boundaries in order to prepare trainees for careers in rapidly changing environment, (2) expanding digital

infrastructure and building community tech-centers in rural area, and (3) developing new methodology combination of technology, teaching-learning process, and digital literacy programs to not only increase digital adoption rate among citizen but also to build a sustainable ecosystem where digital literacy continuously improves and supports economic, social, and individual growth.

LITHUANIA

Ms. Jūratė Šovienė
Chair
Communications Regulatory Authority of the Republic of Lithuania

Question:

What are the main challenges related to the implementation of the projects and initiatives on capacity building and skills gap?

The Communications Regulatory Authority of the Republic of Lithuania identified two mostly vulnerable society groups in the digital society, where we started to bridge the skills gap.

The first direction we dedicated to older people and their digital inclusion.

According to the World Health Organization, population ageing is much faster. By 2030, 1 in 6 people will be aged 60 years or over, and by 2050, the world's population of people aged 60 years and older will double.

The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights stresses that older people sometimes lack the necessary digital skills to use them. For example, EU data show that only 1 in 4 people in the EU aged 65 to 74 have at least basic digital skills.

Unfortunately, Lithuania is no exception in this case.

At the beginning of 2020, almost 2.8 million people lived in Lithuania, one-fifth of whom were 65 or older. It is predicted that in the next 30 years, Lithuania will be one of the fastest-ageing societies: it is likely that by 2050, half of the Lithuanian population will be 51.5 years old, while the EU median age will be 48.

Although the digital infrastructure is strongly developed in Lithuania and more and more services can be accessed online, a part of the society remains on the sidelines, not having the necessary skills to use this infrastructure, as well as being afraid of threats, such as being deceived due to less digital knowledge and skills. Statistics show that digital literacy declines as the population ages. For example, only 26 per cent of the surveyed population aged 70-74 rated their digital skills well or very well. In the 60-69 age group, this share reached 48 per cent.

These facts have inspired the Communications Regulatory Authority of the Republic of Lithuania to launch a project called No One Is Left Behind. The main goal is to reduce the digital divide among older people. In the digital space, we must ensure that the same rights that we have offline would be available online.

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As Doreen Bogdan-Martin, head of the International Telecommunications Union, said during the project presentation in Vilnius, we must ensure sustainable digital transformation. This idea means that we must conserve natural resources and protect the environment and people when digitizing society.

From the beginning of the project No One Is Left Behind, we have identified several main digital problems:

- Cyber-security issues
- The use of e-signature
- Education about digital services and their benefits

Based on this, we launched our project and its workshops. Our experts collaborate with the Third Age University of Lithuania and visit different university departments all over Lithuania. Until the end of May, we have arranged 18 workshops for around 800 elderly people. From the beginning, the project has been under the patronage of the President of the Republic of Lithuania, Gitanas Nausėda.

Various organizations and business representatives are currently joining the project. They understand that this sustainable partnership allows more active users to be confident about using digital society's advantages. So, the benefit is mutual for society, business representatives, and governmental institutions delivering digital services.

The second direction, where we are actively working, is children's education about safe behaviour on the Internet.

Part of our, as Regulator, daily work is running a hotline for receiving and managing reports and data on online illegal child sexual abuse. In 2023, our internet hotline received over 2.5 thousand messages about content forbidden to spread or harm minors on the Internet. The number of reports increased by 65 per cent compared to the previous year. In total, about 60 per cent were confirmed messages. A quarter of the confirmed reports were child sexual abuse material.

Knowing this background, we started lessons for schoolchildren about safer Internet behaviour. Every month, we conducted lessons for schoolchildren of different ages, including topics about secure passwords and behaviour on social networks. These lessons became extremely popular among parents and teachers, who invited our experts to attend their schools. Since last year, more than one thousand schoolchildren have learned about safe Internet behaviour.

Currently, we conduct around four monthly lessons for different-aged schoolchildren, considering that our group of teachers is comprised of 2-3 permanent people.

In Lithuania, the topic of safe Internet is still in the hands of enthusiastic teachers and non-governmental organizations. In February, the Digital Services Act was passed throughout the European Union. It aims to create a safer internet environment for digital users and their fundamentals in the digital space. The European Commission will oversee the largest digital platforms, and the Communications Regulatory Authority will coordinate the implementation of Digital Services Act in Lithuania.

We will collaborate with different Lithuanian institutions to monitor harmful content and consumer rights. We hope that the entry into force of this act establishes clear rules for both Internet service providers and consumers.

NIGERIA

Dr. Aminu Maida
Executive Vice Chairman
Nigerian Communications Commission

Question:

How important is the resilience of telecoms infrastructure in addressing the world's critical social challenges?

Background

The affordances of telecommunications transcend its primary significance as conduit for information-sharing, communication, and sociality. It is the backbone of modern society –the superstructure that enables growth across all sectors and central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), considering its increasing role as enabler of education, healthcare, financial services, and emergency response. Sadly, recent developments such as undersea cable cuts, natural disasters and other socio-political disruptions have exposed the vulnerabilities of telecom infrastructure, providing bases to question its resilience during interruptions.

The Essential Role of Telecoms Infrastructure

Resilient telecommunications infrastructure is critical in supporting a wide range of services that underpin and sustain the society. It is essential for promoting economic growth, reducing social inequality, and addressing global challenges like climate change and pandemics. A principal derivable benefit of robust telecom infrastructure is readily instantiated by the opportunities it provides for students to access quality education and to the vulnerable social groups, especially in unserved and underserved areas, to explore alternate access to health through telemedicine.

Additionally, telecoms infrastructure plays very critical role in disaster response management. By providing the communication channels for coordinating emergency services, lives are saved and public safety is guaranteed.

Addressing Global Challenges: Undersea Cable Cuts and International Cooperation

Regrettably, the delivery of resilient telecom infrastructure faces impediments across the globe, as disruptions to telecom infrastructure occur every so often with devastating consequences. For example, damages to undersea cables can sever international communication links, affecting business operations, governmental communications, and emergency services.

These cables form the backbone of international communications, carry major global internet traffic. Thus, recent incidents involving cable cuts have highlighted the need for international collaboration to protect these critical communication links.

There are several key initiatives aimed at addressing these challenges. The United Nations' International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has called for greater international cooperation to safeguard undersea cables. Additionally, industry-led initiatives, such as the SubOptic Association, bring together global stakeholders to discuss best practices and develop standards for undersea cable resilience.

At the West-African sub-regional level, during the 21st West Africa Telecommunications Regulatory Assembly (WATRA) Annual General Meeting, Nigeria called for a coordinated, multilateral approach to protecting shared infrastructure, including setting up a framework for joint monitoring, risk mitigation, and emergency response procedures for sub-marine cables that pass through the sub-region.

To effectively address the risk of undersea cable cuts, it is essential for all players including governments, industry stakeholders, and regulatory bodies to work together. This includes sharing information on potential threats, investing in robust security measures, and establishing rapid response protocols to quickly address disruptions. By fostering regional and global cooperation, we can ensure that our telecom infrastructure remains resilient and capable of supporting the world's most pressing social challenges.

National Efforts to Enhance Telecom Resilience

Recognizing the critical nature of telecom infrastructure, the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) has taken a proactive approach to enhancing the resilience of the telecoms industry through its advocacy for the designation of telecoms facilities as Critical National Infrastructure (CNI). This underscores Nigeria’s commitment to protecting and securing these vital networks.

By designating telecom infrastructure as CNI, greater collaboration among industry stakeholders, law enforcement agencies, and regulatory bodies would be facilitated to implement effective security measures to protect both physical and cyber threats, thus ensuring that critical services are not disrupted.

Conclusion

It stands to reason, that, availability of resilient telecom infrastructure is critical to addressing the world's most pressing social challenges –from bridging gaps in healthcare access, to providing access to quality and affordable education, as well as in creating jobs for teeming youth populations.

By promoting investment in telecom infrastructure, designating telecom infrastructure as Critical National Infrastructure, investing in cybersecurity and effective security governance measures, as well as rallying stakeholders for strategic collaborations, the NCC is taking significant steps to ensure uninterrupted connectivity and promote socio-economic development. This commitment to telecom resilience is a cornerstone for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and ensuring a brighter, more connected future for all.

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ZIMBABWE

Dr. Gift Kallisto Machengete
Director General
Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe

Question:

How best can we bridge the digital skills gap and what is Zimbabwe doing to build capacity for the digital age?

In Zimbabwe, the digital skills gap is pronounced between gender (boys and girls, women, and men), young and old, between able-bodied and those living with disabilities, between rural and urban (schools and health facilities) as well as between rural teachers and urban teachers.

Gender – We have programs such as Girls in ICT where we are offering scholarships to girls to study STEM subjects. We have recently launched the SHETECH INITIATIVE, and the Women in ICT program all meant to bridge the digital skills gap between men and women.

People living with disabilities – POTRAZ is running a digital skills capacity-building programs where people living with disabilities are given specialized training on basic ICT skills. As Zimbabwe we are proud that one of the photographs taken during the ICT skills training contested in the WSIS PHOTO CONTEST 2024 and the results will be announced during this WSIS session.

Urban and rural – POTRAZ is capacitating rural schools and marginalised communities through setting up school computer laboratories and community Information Centres where training on ICTs is also conducted. Towers relocation program is meant to provide access to meaningful internet connectivity to rural schools to support rural e-learning.

Teacher Capacitation

· Train the Trainer program - Rural school teachers undergoing ICT skills training so that they can impart digital skills to rural students.

· Zimbabwe is promoting digital literacy in education. Schools and educational institutions across the country are incorporating digital skills training into their curriculum, promoting STEM subjects and courses from ECD to university level.

Young and Old - the Digital natives are being supported to promote Research, Innovation and Development through Innovation centers and tech hubs across the various universities and colleges in Zimbabwe. Putting WIFI zones in vocational training colleges in order to provide a supportive environment for aspiring

entrepreneurs and tech enthusiasts to develop their digital skills. Elderly people are being taught digital skills in over 200 CICs dotted across the country.

All these efforts are however hampered by the usual developing country challenges hence the importance of collaboration with partners to connect so that we can achieve meaningful skills capacitation.

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GLOBAL SATELLITE OPERATORS ASSOCIATION (GSOA)

Ms. Isabelle Mauro
Director General

Question:

Connecting everyone, everywhere faces multiple challenges from access to skills, usability and affordability. How can we best build capacity to address these challenges, and will the integration of technologies help bridge the digital gap?

In the digital age, satellite communications with their unique capabilities of Coverage, reliability and resilience, play a pivotal role in bridging connectivity gaps, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their geographical location, can benefit from the digital revolution.

It is expected that the number of people connected via satellite will double to 500 million by 2030, bringing around $250 billion of socio-economic benefits globally.

However, ensuring that access to connectivity truly benefits every part of the population around the globe hinges on two critical factors: digital skills and usability.

In a world where connectivity is increasingly essential for accessing education, healthcare, employment, and financial and social services, possessing digital skills is crucial. Populations without digital skills are at a significant disadvantage and this digital divide exacerbates existing inequalities, particularly affecting vulnerable groups such as the elderly, low-income families, and residents of rural areas.

Initiatives such as GIGA, which aim to bring connectivity in schools to improve education and digital literacy, are essential. Governments and private sectors must collaborate to provide resources and opportunities for learning, ensuring that everyone can participate fully in the digital economy.

Digital skill and usability do have a direct correlation. Even in cases of population having access to the internet and possessing digital skills, the benefits of connectivity are limited if the technologies are not designed to meet the needs of the citizens. It is important to ensure that citizens are better trained to understand how to use digital tools in their day to dayly life and for the technology to support use cases that fit the realities in every corner of the world. Sea, land and air. Hence, meeting the full definition of meaningful connectivity.

This training becomes even more important when it comes to tech companies that need to ensure that their employees are offered capacity building to keep up to speed with the rapid evolution of technology in their respective sectors.

In order for the above to be a success, policy makers need to make informed and future looking decisions. Policy makers and regulators must be equipped with a good understanding of technology as it is evolving very rapidly.

Capacity building, such as GSOA training courses are crucial for policy makers to understand the evolution of technology, market circumstances and create frameworks that will enable their country to foster investment and growth.

By addressing these factors, we can create an inclusive digital world where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Digital transformation is a responsibility of the ecosystem as a whole.

Leaders TalkX: Securing the Digital Realm: Collaborative Strategies for Trust and Resilience

Recording: https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/473

Moderated by High-level Track Facilitator:
Ms. Moira Whelan, Director, Democracy and Technology, National Democratic Institute

UN Representative:
Mr. Preetam Maloor, Head, Emerging Technologies Division International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Speakers:

1. **Namibia**: H.E. Ms. Emma Inamutila Theofelus, Minister, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology
2. **Montenegro:** H.E. Mr. Marash Dukaj, Minister, Ministry of Public Administration
3. **Mauritius:** Mr. Dick Christophe Ng Sui Wa, Chairman, Information and Communication Technologies Authority
4. **Poland**: Dr. Jacek Oko, President, Office of Electronic Communications
5. **Sweden**: Mr. Dan Sjoblom, Director General, Swedish Post and Telecom Authority
6. **Internet Society**: Mr. Andrew Sullivan, President and CEO

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Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator

Key Issues Discussed

The cost of cybercrime has skyrocketed, and a cyber attack happens every 30 seconds around the globe. New threats such as AI driven cyberthreats, scrambling to be ready for a post-quantum world as well as the physical security of subsea cables and satellite systems are rising.

The ITU Global Cybersecurity Index in 2017 stated that 128 countries lacked cybersecurity standards and 110 countries didn't have a cybersecurity strategy. This number reduced to 88 and 67, respectively in just 5 years.

Given the borderless nature of cyber security-related incidents, international cooperation is increasingly vital in cultivating trust and internet regulators play a critical role in setting the tone for collaboration within governments to ensure confidence and security with the private sector and the public.

Sharing information among countries and regulators creates working procedures for resilience and lessons learned, which are essential for the success of trade and the prosecution of cybercrimes.

Cybersecurity collaboration at a high level brings information between different stakeholders, such as organizations, government agencies, industry associations, and security professionals. By pooling knowledge and resources, we can increase cybersecurity readiness and improve security measures.

Emerging Trends, Challenges, Achievements, and Opportunities

Trust in the system is the most essential element of cybersecurity. Citizens must trust that the system not only works, but that their data is safe. COVID is an example of how much faith was lost in governments not simply from a health perspective, but also when it came to digital rights. The common element of enabling this resilience across governments are multistakeholder and collaborative frameworks.

Artificial intelligence is becoming a key factor in the transformation of the entire global society and plays a key role in improving IT security through analysis of large amounts of data to detect and prevent security threats. Challenges such as an insufficient number of experts and finances are an obstacle for small countries. Enabling the interoperability of the global system is key to allowing small countries to share resources.

Success Stories

Mutually Agreed Norms for Routing Security (MANRS) demonstrates what can be achieved with collaboration. MANRS is a global, community-driven initiative to improve the security and resilience of the Internet's global routing system that uses the Border Gateway Protocol (BGP). MANRS was created in 2014 by a small group of network operators who recognized the need to join forces to improve the system and has grown to a community of more than 1,000 participants. The MANRS community comprises network operators, Internet exchange points (IXPs), content delivery networks (CDNs), cloud providers, and equipment vendors who have committed to taking MANRS actions and reducing common routing threats.

The 5G Tactics programme focuses on the issue of cybersecurity and trust in 5G networks among several countries. The programme aims to foster cooperation between national authorities to include Montenegro and private service and equipment providers, in particular innovative European SMEs, network operators and specialized technology providers based on Open RAN.

The Swedish government took steps to address Spoofing through advising telecommunications companies to block Swedish phone numbers from abroad to prevent fraud. This has resulted in a significant number of phone numbers used in fraud to be blocked.

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Tangible Outcomes

ACHIEVEMENT: Despite the arrival of more than a million new people from Ukraine into Poland in less than 10 days, mobile operators, with the regulator's assistance, were able to ensure the smooth operation of services to a whole host of new customers by rapidly expanding network capacity. When people needed it most, reliable, safe and trustworthy connectivity enabled survivors–across borders– to respond and act in a crisis.

ACHIEVEMENT: The WSIS system enables regulators to stay on the cutting edge of technology. In Mauritius, the ICT regulator developed a blockchain-based license verification system as the risk of forged, fake or invalid ICTA licenses in circulation which are being used fraudulently is a reality. The Mauritian ICT regulator launched this new verification service so as to give added assurance to the different stakeholders and the public using licenses issued by the regulator. This verification system makes use of smart contracts on the Ethereum blockchain to store cryptographic proof of the ICTA licenses.

Actionable Plan and Key Recommendations

Education of citizens is a key need. Most individuals don't know how to protect themselves online and more work must be done to empower people to protect themselves. Internet regulators must be at the center of this and address it in a multistakeholder way. Sweden hosts Digital Today to inspire an increase in digital skills. It currently has 375 partners and goal for this year is 1 million partners working together to enable digital skills of citizens in all municipalities. Greater funding is needed throughout the world to address this issue.

SMS can be altered easily and is being used to mislead users to believe it is sent by an authority such as a government or a bank and regulators must. It is a key indicator or a space where regulators can't operate without the cooperation of other entities, but is a tangible and persistent problem that must be addressed to allow people to trust the technology and the system.

Suggestions for Thematic Aspects - might be Included in the WSIS Forum 2025

Although at its origin, the WSIS system did not conceive of many of the challenges identified, the open and collaborative process has allowed countries to quickly scale best practices to address emerging technologies in an inclusive, multi stakeholder fashion that is central to resilience and security. A greater priority should be placed on the role of regulators in this process and their responsibility to help grow the system, especially fostering Small and Medium providers access to tools and best practices and the essential nature of multistakeholder models increasing the security and resilience of countries' digital infrastructure should be elevated.

The topic of cable cuts–and the number of challenges seen in 2024– should be addressed in WSIS Forum 2025 as it illuminates the need to prioritize resilience and trust through the internet system itself. The ultimate objective is to get data to its final destination. The Internet works best --it is most robust-- when its many different, independent operators have many ways to achieve their goal through manifold connections. That makes the Internet more trustworthy in that its users can rely on it to be available all the time.

NAMIBIA

H.E. Ms. Emma Inamutila Theofelus
Minister
Ministry of Information and Communication Technology

Question:

How can citizens learn to trust governments in securing their digital rights and interests?

[MISSING STATEMENT]

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MONTENEGRO

H.E. Mr. Marash Dukaj
Minister
Ministry of Public Administration

Question:

Artificial intelligence – how are we transitioning from benefits to risks?

Artificial intelligence is becoming a key factor in the transformation of the entire global society at a time when we are facing a series of simultaneous crises. Financial instability, political unrest, climate change, migrations, pandemics, as well as the aging of Western civilization require innovative and efficient approaches in order to better analyze the current situation and create an environment for proactive response. New technologies, including artificial intelligence, give such a comprehensive process a chance.

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming our lives, offering technological advances in learning, product and service design, and task automation. In 2024, artificial intelligence, especially generative AI, has become a key component of everyday life. It contributed to improving productivity, speeding up and improving work processes both in the public administration and in the private sector. First of all, AI plays a key role in improving IT security through analysis of large amounts of data to detect and prevent security threats. The present day says that risk management and ethical use of AI is a priority.

Montenegro, although a relatively small country, must not lag behind in the field of artificial intelligence, and challenges such as an insufficient number of experts and finances must not remain an obstacle. With the right policies and strategies, Montenegro intends to become part of the global progress in managing artificial intelligence. This includes the promotion of data openness, big data, meta data, cooperation with international partners, education as well as increased investments in digitalization, innovation, motivation of IT staff and attracting investments. Therefore, the next steps will be aimed at further establishing the interoperability of the system, improving the quality of data and increasing the digital literacy of the entire society.

The aforementioned requires the improvement of education through the integration of relevant IT topics, the creation of an environment that is attractive for digital nomads and IT companies. Also, it is important to establish sustainable links between the IT sector, and within it the use of artificial intelligence and other areas such as environmental protection, healthcare, art, education, etc. because by integrating them we can contribute to sustainable development and improve the standard of living of the citizens of Montenegro.

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MAURITIUS

Mr. Dick Christophe Ng Sui Wa
Chairman
Information and Communication Technologies Authority

Question:

According to you, what role has the ICT Regulator in Mauritius played within the collaborative framework required to ensure confidence and security in the use of Digital Technologies?

In line with Action Line B5 'Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs' in Geneva Declaration of Principles, WSIS 2003, strengthening the trust framework, is a prerequisite for the development of the Information Society and for building confidence among users of ICTs.

In fact, in this digital age, trust is everything. In the age of the internet and digital technology, trust has become an essential component of our daily lives. We entrust our personal and financial information to online platforms, and we rely on digital tools to perform many of our daily tasks. Digital trust is, therefore, crucial to ensuring that people feel safe and confident in using these technologies.

It helps to ensure that people can use digital technologies without fear of their data being compromised. This is particularly important for sensitive information, such as financial or medical data. It is also crucial for businesses that rely on digital tools and platforms to operate. Companies need to be able to trust that their data is secure and that their online activities will not be disrupted by cyberattacks.

As we embark on the journey of digital transformation, the importance of IT security cannot be overstated. In fact, IT security plays a vital role in ensuring the success, sustainability, and resilience of any digital transformation initiative. Enhancing cybersecurity and protecting infrastructure have become essential to every nation's social and economic development. it is essential for us to understand how to cultivate trust in this ever-evolving landscape.

In today's interconnected world, cybersecurity is more important than ever before. Organisations of all sizes face an increasing number of cyber threats, including costly data breaches and ransomware attacks. When bad actors strike, organisations can suffer devastating financial and reputational consequences. At the same time, organisations can face heightened risks if their most sensitive data is stolen. Effective and efficient collaboration has become an essential aspect of cybersecurity strategies to counter these evolving threats.

One good example is the collaborative framework provided by the ITU. Given the borderless nature of cyber security related incidents, international cooperation is increasingly vital in cultivating this trust. In

this respect, the ITU serves as a key platform for global dialogue, helping its members to find and maintain a consistent approach on cybersecurity issues and in facilitating policy dialogue.

This type of collaborative platform allows us to harness the collective expertise of our community, leading to innovative solutions that meet the evolving needs of our users. By involving stakeholders, partners, and the industry on such collaborative platforms, effective trustworthy cybersecurity measures can become a tangible outcome of this endeavour.

The first step to building trust is to communicate clearly and convincingly how your new technology can solve a problem, meet a need, or create an opportunity for your target audience. The second step is to provide evidence and proof that your new technology works as intended, and that it meets or exceeds the standards and expectations of your audience and the third step to building trust is to invite and encourage dialogue and feedback from your audience, and to respond to their questions, comments, or concerns.

Sharing information about risks and dangers is one of the main purposes of industry and government cooperation. By exchanging this kind of information, industry and government can stay informed about the most recent ransomware, malware, phishing frauds, viruses, and insider threats. Sharing information also creates working procedures for resilience and lessons learned, which are essential for the success of trade and the prosecution of cybercrimes.

Public Private Partnerships are particularly important when it comes to protecting critical infrastructure. More than eighty percent of the vital infrastructure—such as those related to banking and finance, healthcare, transportation, and education—is held by the private sector and subject to public regulation.

Because of growing threats, government and industry also need to continually prioritise safeguarding the critical infrastructure supply chain. Supply-chain networks, which frequently involve several vendors, are a preferred target for hackers. Their objectives are to exploit suppliers, companies, contractors, and weak points in the supply chain. This is frequently accomplished via infiltrating networks with compromised or fake hardware and software, taking advantage of suppliers' lax security procedures. Cyberattacks targeting supply chains may be carried out by lawbreakers or hacktivists. Strengthening industry and government cooperation is also a prudent step in the solution to addressing supply chain vulnerabilities.

To combat the rising cyber threats, it will also be necessary to make ongoing investments in people, procedures, and new technology and improve collaboration between the public and commercial sectors.

Cybersecurity collaboration at a high level brings information between different stakeholders, such as organisations, government agencies, industry associations, and security professionals. By pooling knowledge and resources, we can increase cybersecurity readiness and improve security measures. This includes being able to detect, prevent, and respond to cyber incidents. Within this collaborative framework, the ICT regulator plays a central role in ensuring confidence and security in the use of Digital Technologies. Moreover, they must also understand emerging cybersecurity challenges and collaborate with stakeholders to develop policies and regulations that help build trust in cyberspace, and in the use of digital technologies.

As cyber incidents in the ICT sector represent a global challenge because of their intrinsic cross-border nature, the lack of harmonisation across different jurisdictions and the rapid development of emerging technologies could be tackled by the ICT regulator to contribute to the strengthening of national cyber resilience with effective measures which can be replicated at the international level through collaborative platforms.

Another important aspect for the ICT regulator to consider is that in order to keep pace with emerging technologies, the ICT regulator must itself first become technologically savvy by itself adopting these new technologies. It is only then that it will be able to take informed decisions on the regulatory framework required for these new technologies, bearing in mind that regulation should not stifle innovation. As an example, in Mauritius we took this practical approach. The ICT regulator recently came up with an innovative blockchain based licence verification system as the risk of forged, fake or invalid ICTA licences in circulation which are being used fraudulently is a reality. To address this problem, the Mauritian ICT regulator launched this new verification service so as to give added assurance to the different stakeholders

and the public using licences issued by the regulator. This verification system makes use of smart contracts on the Ethereum blockchain to store cryptographic proof of the ICTA licences on the blockchain. These digital documents are tamper-proof documents which proves who issued it. They are the electronic equivalent of the physical documents which we all possess today, such as: ID cards, passports, driving licences and qualifications.

In so doing, the Mauritian ICT regulator has not only set an example in the use of emerging technology which is the blockchain technology. With its practical understanding of the blockchain technology, it took an informed stand to recommend to the policy maker the necessary relevant legal and regulatory updates to be incorporated in the Electronic Transaction Act of Mauritius with respect to smart contracts. Such an example which is related to the strengthening of the cybersecurity framework of a country, if escalated and discussed at the level of a collaborative platform, can eventually be considered for adoption in other countries as one standardised cybersecurity best practice measure for emerging technologies. The idea here is to ensure not only the proper adoption of emerging technology, but also to ensure that its appropriate regulatory framework is put in place.

While the benefits of cybersecurity collaboration speak for themselves, implementing it effectively does have its challenges. One of the biggest challenges in cybersecurity collaboration is establishing trust among participants. Many organisations may not be eager to share sensitive information. Building trust requires establishing strong relationships among all parties. The easiest way to do that is by using collaboration platforms that ensure confidentiality while also implementing clear legal and governance frameworks designed to protect shared information.

We should also bear in mind that collaboration often involves stakeholders with different budgets, priorities, objectives, and organisational cultures. These differences can be a deterrent to effective collaboration as participants may have conflicting approaches and different levels of urgency. Overcoming these challenges requires open communication, compromise, and a shared understanding of the common goal of improving cybersecurity.

Cybersecurity collaboration is a powerful approach to combat the ever-growing challenges of cyber threats. By working together, organisations can leverage shared knowledge, resources, and expertise to enhance threat detection, improve incident response, and strengthen their overall security posture.

As my final thoughts, I would say that while challenges such as trust, differing priorities, and resource allocation exist in cybersecurity collaboration, these hurdles can be overcome through open communication, clear objectives, and a commitment to building strong partnerships. We should all be reminded that by implementing best practices and fostering a culture of collaboration, each stakeholder can effectively contribute to the emergence of a collective defence strategy which is more and more required against cyber threats, ultimately creating a safer digital ecosystem.

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POLAND

Dr. Jacek Oko
President
Office of Electronic Communications

Question:

What can a regulator do to ensure trust and resilience of networks?

There are several important aspects of this issue that are relevant. None of them individually is a sufficient condition, but together they are a prerequisite for success in ensuring the operation of trustworthy and resilient networks.

First of all, the regulator needs to acquire knowledge. It needs to have a team of people who not only understand the challenges, but also work closely with other teams responsible for cyber crisis operations at home and around the world.

Secondly, it is important to have close and direct contacts with the network operators at a working level. Not with the people in charge of regulations but contacts with engineers, IT specialists and system administrators. We managed to build such a team almost four years ago as part of the ISAC (Information Sharing and Analysis Center) activities. A team in which we trust each other and where all participants benefit from its activities. Practically day-to-day contacts allow information to be shared and actions to be developed jointly, resulting in a faster response to irregularities. The real test came when the war broke out in Ukraine - and we passed it. Despite the arrival of more than a million new people from Ukraine, mobile operators, with regulator's assistance, were able to ensure the smooth operation of services to a whole host of new customers by rapidly expanding network capacity.

Third, it is important for the regulator to be actively involved in R&D projects related to the security and resilience of telecommunications networks. An example of this is the 5G Tactics programme, with a budget of €5 million, where we are focusing on the issue of cybersecurity and trust in 5G networks together with colleagues from several countries. The programme aims to foster cooperation between national authorities and private service and equipment providers, in particular innovative European SMEs, network operators and specialised technology providers. In this context, the project will define the elements of the security architecture and operating procedures of 5G networks, and then develop and adopt an appropriate set of tools and recommendations for the cybersecurity of these networks, as well as the cybersecurity of the infrastructure elements that make up the 5G network and support its operation.

Fourthly, it is important to remember that the large telecoms operators have the budgets to deal with threats and outages on their own. The smaller operators cannot be forgotten, as they may have difficulty with accessing network maintenance specialists. This is where the regulator has an important role to play in providing recommendations and historical examples of successful threat mitigation.

SWEDEN

Mr. Dan Sjoblom
Director General
Swedish Post and Telecom Authority

Question:

Spoofing is one way to commit cybercrime, such as fraud. What does the Swedish Post and Telecom Authority do to prevent this type of cybercrime?

The Swedish Post and Telecom Authority (PTS) works within a broad spectrum of questions. Focus has shifted from questions regarding deployment of infrastructure to digital services.

The usage of Swedish numbers from abroad is sometimes a mean to commit fraud, so-called "spoofing". PTS has together with the Swedish telecom operators and the Swedish Telecom Advisors1 put in place recommendations to the Swedish telecom operators regarding "spoofing". Swedish mobile numbers used abroad can be used while roaming, to be able to block those used to commit fraud from abroad, the Swedish telecom operators first need to implement new technology. PTS has mandate to decide binding rules regarding blocking Swedish numbers used from abroad, which PTS aim to put in place this year.

PTS also has an assignment from the Swedish government with a wider perspective on these issues. PTS is asked to map the usage of electronic communication services to commit fraud and propose actions to prevent manipulation of phone numbers, "spoofing", and other ways where electronic communication services is being used to commit fraud. The result of the mapping and proposed actions could be that PTS needs more mandate to be able to take action to prevent maluse. One issue we look at is the problem with alphanumeric SMS sender ID, which can be used to mislead you that the text message for example is from your bank or an authority. This issue has already been solved in some countries. PTS cooperate with other NRA:s on these issues within CEPT.

Ensuring confidence and security in the use of Digital Technologies is really important. PTS work to ensure that everyone can benefit from the opportunities of digitalization, regardless of ability or circumstances. As of January 2024, PTS has a new tool to use in this ambition, Digitalidag, a collaboration platform. The goal is to inspire everyone to be willing and able to take part in the Digital society. Together with our partners we make a significant joint effort to prioritize the opportunities and challenges of digitalization. Activities take place across the entire country. Last year, over 375 partners from various sectors participated and organized 1,000 activities in 216 municipalities.

Digitalidag was created by the private sector, founded on the strong belief that broad collaboration is key for Sweden to succeed in inspiring more people to be willing and able to be part of digital development. Through Digitalidag, we aim to promote cooperation between the private and public sectors as well as civil

society. Making sure everyone takes part in the Digital society is not something PTS can make sure on our own, we have to work together.

This is why it calls for multi stakeholder cooperation to be able to meet everyone, in places where they feel safe, through organisations that is relevant for them and according to their need. The goal for Digitalidag this year is that 1 million people develop their digital skills and that there are events taking place in all the 290 municipalities in Sweden.

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INTERNET SOCIETY

Mr. Andrew Sullivan
President and CEO

Question:

Can you give a real-life example of how collaboration can bolster trust and resilience on the Internet?

The success story of the Mutually Agreed Norms for Routing Security (MANRS) deserves to be widely known. MANRS is a global, community-driven initiative to improve the security and resilience of the Internet's global routing system that uses the Border Gateway Protocol (BGP). With support from the Internet Society, MANRS was created in 2014 by a small group of network operators who recognized the need to join forces to improve the system. MANRS has grown from nine original operators to a community of more than 1,000 participants within a decade.

The MANRS community comprises network operators, Internet exchange points (IXPs), content delivery networks (CDNs), cloud providers, and equipment vendors who have committed to taking MANRS actions and reducing common routing threats. MANRS would not have been possible without the dedication of these participants and partner organizations. Together, the MANRS community is driving the global adoption of MANRS actions and improvements in routing security. Efforts toward achieving this goal include providing reliable tools for compliance and measurement, such as the MANRS Observatory; building capacity of network engineers through tutorials, courses, and workshops; and promoting training, research, and policy analysis through the Mentors and Ambassadors program.

Last year (2023), we supported three mentors and eight ambassadors to work together in their regions and industries to train engineers in routing security best practices, conduct research on detecting incidents, build new tools for the MANRS community, and help policymakers better understand why routing security matters. Collectively, they conducted 20 training events in eight countries, reaching hundreds of people around the globe.

I also wanted to note another example, which is Internet Exchanges. The topic of cable cuts has come up a lot since this meeting started. Yet Internet exchanges provide part of the answer to dealing with cable cuts because they keep traffic in general local to its final destination. The Internet works best --it is most robust-- when its many different, independent operators have many ways to achieve their goal through manifold connections. That makes the Internet more trustworthy because its users can rely on it to be always available.

Leaders TalkX: When Policy Meets Progress: Shaping a Fit for Future Digital World

Recording: https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/497

Moderated by High-level Track Facilitator:

Ms. Timea Suto Global Policy Lead International Chamber of Commerce

UN Representative:
Ms. Sofie Maddens, Chief, Digital Knowledge Hub Department International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Speakers:

1. **Algeria:** H.E. Mr. Karim Bibi Triki Minister Ministry of Post and Telecommunications
2. **Bahrain:** Mr. Philip Marnick General Director Telecommunications Regulatory Authority
3. **Georgia:** Ms. Ekaterine Imedadze, Commissioner, Georgian National Communications Commission and Outgoing Chaiperson, EaPeReg EU Eastern Partnership
4. **Mexico:** Mr. Javier Juárez Mojica, Acting Chairman, Federal Telecommunications Institute (IFT)
5. **United States of America:** Mr. Steve Lang, Deputy Assistant Secretary, United States Department of State
6. **Commonwealth Telecommunication Organization (CTO)**: Ms. Bernadette Lewis, Secretary General

Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator

Introduction

The Leaders Talk entitled When Policy Meets Progress: Shaping a Fit for Future Digital World took place on Tuesday, 28 May 2024 and discussed the crucial importance of creating enabling policy environments to foster innovation, bridge digital divides, and enhance socio-economic development.

The session kicked off with an overview of the topic delivered by ITU, highlighting the need to create synergies between all stakeholders, remain agile and flexible, and streamline regulations to be able to create fit-for-purpose policy frameworks that help respond to the ever-changing world of digital technologies and fully reap the opportunities they offer and address any potential challenges this rapid transformation may bring. Panellists then discussed how their countries and organizations approach the topic, what are some of the best practices and lessons learned for the broader WSIS community to build on, and what the road ahead looks like.

Vision

The session underscored the need for greater collaboration and multistakeholder dialogue. Participants emphasized the importance of a shared vision, common objectives and joint action across government agencies, the entire digital ecosystem and all impacted stakeholders to devise effective solutions and improve cooperation so that all can share in the benefits of the information society.

WSIS+20: 20 Years of Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities

Participants noted the WSIS+20 Forum as a significant milestone, offering the opportunity to renew commitments in line with the efforts and initiatives undertaken by the international community to advance the information society, and celebrate two decades of progress and achievement of the

objectives set in the Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda.

Towards the Summit of the Future / GDC and Beyond

The discussion highlighted the importance of reflecting on and taking stock of past achievements to inform future progress. They noted how WSIS, particularly the Geneva Plan of Action, provides an ambitious roadmap to leverage ICTs for sustainable development and social inclusion, highlighting the importance of international and multistakeholder collaboration and innovation. They noted the need to build on this roadmap in upcoming discussions at the Summit of the Future.

Fresh Priorities

Participants stressed the importance of policies and regulations keeping pace with rapidly evolving technologies. This requires a nimble policy-making and regulatory process, embracing regulatory sandboxes, and fostering a culture of innovation that allows for testing and learning from both successes and failures. They also highlighted the need for awareness-raising, information sharing, and capacity-building initiatives to build trust among users, businesses, and governments.

Emerging Trends

In sharing their own projects, initiatives and lessons learned, participants noted the need for:

• Holistic view of the digital ecosystem:

Policies should foster investment, competition, and innovation in the development and deployment of broadband services and connectivity devices, with the aim of expanding affordable access. At the same time policies should facilitate investment in and enable the development of content and services that helps drive and sustain adoption, including through expanded e-government services.

Governments should also invest directly in digital literacy and skills development.

• Political will:

Strong, and forward-looking commitments are necessary only to set strategies and visions, but to effectively implement them and ensure long-term planning;

• Agility:

Given the large variety of barriers to connectivity to be addressed, as well as the speed at which new services, players and business models appear, it is vital that regulatory regimes are flexible, forward-looking, adjust to rapidly evolving markets and encourage innovation. Regulators should focus on critical societal objectives and introduce flexible, light-touch approaches to achieve them, being cautious not to regulate prescriptively at too granular a level, which may limit the flexibility needed to consider or capitalise on innovative potential.

• Evidence-based policymaking:

Policymaking and regulation should be evidence-based, transparent, inclusive of all stakeholders.

• International cooperation:

The interconnectedness of today's world demands robust international collaboration to tackle digital challenges and opportunities that transcend borders. Participants emphasized that global cooperation is essential to address issues such as fostering trust and security, ensure cross-border data flows, and the interoperability of policy approaches and regulatory frameworks. Collaborative efforts can also facilitate the sharing of best practices and coordinated responses to global digital divides.

• Multistakeholder approach:

A diverse and inclusive approach involving all stakeholders is crucial for effective digital policy-making. Participants highlighted that incorporating multiple perspectives leads to more comprehensive and resilient policy frameworks that are better equipped to address the complex and multifaceted nature of digital transformation.

• Capacity building:

Participants underscored the need for continuous capacity-building initiatives that focus on digital literacy, technical skills, and regulatory expertise. This includes providing training and education programs to enhance the digital skills of the workforce, empowering individuals to use digital tools effectively, and equipping policymakers with the knowledge to craft informed and forward-looking regulations.

Opportunities

Participants in the session highlighted how access to ICTs and digital technologies and bridging the digital divides is not the goal in itself, but a means to unlocking broader development goals. Meaningful connectivity opens opportunities for economic and social growth such as financial inclusion, broad access to education and healthcare and improved avenues for public services to reach all citizens and enhanced entrepreneurship and growth opportunities for small businesses

Challenges

Participants identified several key challenges to creating an enabling policy environment for ICTs and digitalization. These include bridging the digital divide, particularly in developing countries and rural and hard-to-reach areas, and building trust in digital technologies. Policy and regulatory frameworks often lag behind rapid technological innovation, necessitating agile and adaptable regulations. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts and international collaboration to maximize the benefits of digital technologies.

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Links to WSIS Action Lines and Sustainable Development Goals

This session explored WSIS Action Line 6, and was also strongly linked with WSIS Action lines 2, 3 and 5 as well as all 17 SDGs.

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ALGERIA

H.E. Mr. Karim Bibi Triki
Minister
Ministry of Post and Telecommunications

Question:

Algeria has made significant progress in the development of ICT infrastructures, as shown by the evolution of key indicators over the past few years.

What strategies have accelerated the development of telecoms infrastructures to promote broader digital inclusion and equitable socio-economic development?

Madam Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union,

Mister federal Councilor, member of the Swiss Federal Council in charge of the Federal Department of Environment, Transport, Energy and Communication,

Your Excellencies Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen Ambassadors,

Representatives of International Organizations,

Honourable audience.

Allow me, first and foremost, to express my gratitude for being invited to this high-level meeting and to share with you, the pleasure of seizing this opportunity to exchange and interact, with my colleagues, the achievements, challenges and perspectives of ICTs development in the world, and therefore, their central role in enhancing our citizens' inclusion within the information society as well as their positive impact on the sustainable development of our countries.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to all ITU entities and stakeholders for their great and continuous efforts in supporting the development and strengthening of ICT sector.

Our meeting is being held a year ahead of the UN General Assembly to collect the outcomes of the World Summit during the last twenty years, in a bid to shape its future. This high-calibre event is also included within the perspective of the « Future Summit » which will tackle, inter alia, the themes of the world digital pact, which is a key proposal to regulate the impact of digital technologies on society.

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The WSIS+20 Forum marks an important additional milestone and a renewed commitment in line with the efforts and initiatives undertaken by the international community in favour of the evolution of the information society, to celebrate, as such, two decades of progress and achievement of the objectives of the Summit's mainlines which focus on the individual and developing countries.

While we are meeting to examine, as I said before, the challenges and opportunities we face, it is vital that we remember the commitments made at the 1st World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), particularly the Geneva Plan of Action. This plan has drawn up an ambitious roadmap to take advantage of the ICTs potential to serve sustainable development and social inclusion. It highlights the importance of the international community, innovation and enhancing digital inclusion.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In this respect, and in harmony with the mainlines set out as part of the WSIS, let me emphasize on the noticeable achievements made by my country to develop the digital infrastructures, since they constitute the essential foundation pillars of achieving the major objectives of the WSIS in terms of connectivity.

Indeed, thanks to the huge investments on the financial level, and mainly on the human capital embodied by our precious national competences, and solid partnerships with all the stakeholders of the economic and scientific sphere, obviously with the strong involvement of the civil society as well as the assistance of the international community, we have significantly improved accessibility and the quality of telecoms services nationwide.

We have succeeded in and keep deploying leading-edge networks to ensure rapid and reliable connectivity by giving a particular attention to regional equity even in the remotest regions.

Our commitment toward digital inclusion is reflected in tangible actions for a universal access and service of quality to the ICTs and Internet, thus reducing the digital divide and encouraging the social inclusion. Such achievements prove our determination to create a digital environment, dynamic and fair for all our fellow citizens.

For information about the performances and achievements our country has made in terms of ICTs development, and as regards fixed Internet, its indicators are growing constantly, at their top the number of subscribers which has reached, today (in 2024), 5.7 million subscribers while it was 3.5 million early 2020, to register thereby a 63% increase: with a penetration rate of more than 64% for landlines and internet.

In the same vein, while taking into account the particular attention by the governmental approach as a modernization lever for the internet access and the continuous improvement of its bandwidth quality, the deployment of fiber optic to home (FTTH) has achieved a significant improvement by climbing from 50 thousand subscribers in early 2020, to 1.3 million subscribers in 2024.

As for mobile connectivity, it is no exception. In fact, it has also recorded honourable performances. The number of subscribers exceeds the threshold of 48 million for a population of 46 million inhabitants.

Algeria's capacities of the international bandwidth have considerably increased to reach 9.8TB/s in 2024, compared to 1.5TB/s in the last three years.

Thanks to this quantitative and qualitative leap, more than 80% of Algerian citizens have regular access to very high-speed Internet, by combining different technologies (satellite, mobile, fixed, wired and wireless).

Our country is also working to enhance confidence and security in the use of information and communications technologies (TIC). Therefore, we have put in place many policies and procedures to enhance the security of digital infrastructure, protect personal data, and combat cyber threats, in addition to educating users and informing them of the best practices in cyber security. These initiatives are essential to ensure a safe and efficient digital environment for all our citizens and promoting a culture of cybersecurity in our society.

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Honourable audience

Today, we are at a key moment in our journey to a digital future. A future which is based on a new level of cooperation and collaboration of digital stakeholders, and our forum is just a leading example of this cooperation's success.

Parallel to this, the WSIS annual forum has an important position in this dynamic. Its process should pursue beyond 2025, given the fact that the objective reality of the digital divide has not yet been bridged, which means the objectives set twenty years ago have not all been implemented.

Besides, I would like, in this spirit, to spotlight the major axis to take up the current challenges and achieve our common vision of an inclusive and sustainable digital future.

First, we should intensify our international cooperation. Today's world is more interconnected than never before, and the challenges we face surpass the national borders. Therefore, it is essential that our collaboration with the ITU's members, the other UN bodies as well as international and regional organizations. By working together, we can better apprehend and take up the complex challenges of telecoms/ICTs sector, while moving toward achieving the sustainable development goals.

Second, we must enhance innovation and digital inclusion. Innovation is the driving force of digital transformation and should be accessible to be truly transformative.

We must also invest in research and development of emerging technologies, while ensuring that none is left behind in this digital revolution.

To conclude, in order to build an inclusive information society, it is necessary to invest in robust infrastructures, digital education, appropriate regulatory frameworks and initiatives aiming at ensuring a fair and affordable access to new technologies and technology of information and communications.

By combining these efforts with the policies of support to innovation and entrepreneurship, we will be able to create an environment that allows everyone to benefit from the digital transformation.

Before concluding I would like to thank the organizers of this Summit for the suitable conditions to make it a success.

My thanks and greetings are also addressed to all the delegations here, to whom I wish rich works and a fruitful exchange of expertise and ideas.

Thank you for your attention!

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BAHRAIN

Mr. Philip Marnick
General Director
Telecommunications Regulatory Authority

Question:

We don't know which applications will be successful. How do you encourage businesses to test in ways that enable lessons to be learnt and business opportunities to be engaged?

[MISSING STATEMENT]

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GEORGIA

Ms. Ekaterine Imedadze
Commissioner
Georgian National Communications Commission and Outgoing Chaiperson, EaPeReg
EU Eastern Partnership

Question:

What are the key areas and activities you support in your country that can be brought up as examples of the enabling and facilitating capacity in the digital development sector?

The term "enabling environment" describes the interplay between national and global policy, legal, market, and social factors that support ICT-led growth.

Thus, regulators' roles are evolving as a result of immersive technology's ability to accelerate digital transformation.

To keep up with the rapid advancement of technology, we need to pay close attention and never stop looking for the most effective way to foster the growth of digital businesses while taking global regulatory trends into account. Further, maintaining a healthy balance between encouraging innovation and safeguarding the interests of customers is essential to creating an environment that is supportive of innovation.

It starts with the legacy role of competition promotion in the new digital market landscape. A case-by-case analysis that considers cross-border and inter-sectoral factors would be the most suitable approach.

We all agree that the expansion of the digital economy is greatly aided by spectrum, particularly with the introduction of 5G, satellite, and other next-generation services. In order to promote competition, investment, and the best possible use of spectrum, it can be helpful to combine the use of shared, unlicensed, and/or licensed spectrum. This will evolve into a licensing scheme that demonstrates adaptability and agility while supporting smooth market entry for different players.

Regarding the strategic infrastructure projects, it is evident that Georgia ought to seize its regional potential in order to become the digital connection centre of the South Caucasus. Building a regional data centre and utilising the undersea digital corridors can result in the acquisition of several responsibilities, including hosting content, cloud services, artificial intelligence, and machine learning, as well as acting as a hub for key digital platforms. This will be a robust background where SMEs will emerge as the key promoters of the multistakeholder digital ecosystem.

Further, as a convergent regulator that oversees the media and telecommunications sectors, ComCom is also responsible for promoting media literacy in Georgian society. Our projects prioritise the needs of users in order to address the essential elements of building trust. These include public-private partnerships, education campaigns on Internet safety, and preventive measures aimed at protecting children online that are linked to educational institutions. In this situation, ComCom's broader role in allowing environments that promote user confidence and security is essential.

In order to achieve the ideal level of regional and global harmonisation, we must thereby set the stage for a new era of more collaborative and participatory regulation and integrate best practices.

Ultimately, I believe the development of a participatory society and digital inclusion should be the primary goals of digital innovation.

Ultimately, I believe that we should benefit from the human- and data-centric paradigm of the internet of people and its societal advantages in order to improve people's quality of life and foster innovation and growth for all.

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MEXICO

Mr. Javier Juárez Mojica
Acting Chairman
Federal Telecommunications Institute (IFT)

Question:

How does Mexico's IFT conceive the current connectivity challenge and what is it doing to address it?

The Federal Telecommunications Institute (IFT) is a regulator with constitutional autonomy. This means that, as a public institution of the Mexican State it does not depend on the Executive Branch. The idea behind this design is for us to make decisions based strictly on technical criteria, free from any economic and political interests.

During the 10 years of the Institute's existence, various advancements have been made in the telecommunication and broadcasting sectors. Since its creation in 2013, we have seen significant growth in Internet connectivity in Mexico. In 2013, only 40 out of every 100 Mexican households had a broadband Internet connection. Today, 71 out of every 100 households are connected to broadband Internet. Regarding mobile broadband, we have grown from approximately 27 million to 120 million mobile broadband Internet access lines.

Prices are also a relevant factor that has improved thanks to competition. In this decade, telecommunications prices have decreased by approximately 31%, while inflation has seen a cumulative increase of 62%.

Of course, challenges lie ahead. We would like to achieve penetration and usage levels like those shared by Bahrain. Until we reach those levels, we will continue to have pending tasks. Therefore, we are guided by the compass defined by the International Telecommunication Union as universal and meaningful connectivity.

Our goal is to achieve greater digital literacy. In this sense, of the 25 million Mexicans over the age of 6 who do not use the Internet, one in two, or 54%, do not use it because they do not know how. Therefore, it is essential for us to strengthen digital skills.

Finally, we want to promote Internet use in small and medium-sized enterprises, which represent 72% of employment in Mexico. To achieve this, we are creating and systematizing a website where we will provide all the necessary information for these companies to achieve their digitalization. All of this is guided by the principle of collaborative regulation recognized by the ITU, which will be our guide to achieving these objectives.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Mr. Steve Lang
Deputy Assistant Secretary
United States Department of State

Question:

When we talk about an enabling environment, what is the connection between innovation and economic growth with secure and trustworthy ICTs?

[MISSING STATEMENT]

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COMMONWEALTH TELECOMMUNICATIONS ORGANISATION (CTO)

Ms. Bernadette Lewis
Secretary General

Question:

What unintended consequences can arise when policies are not grounded in the reality of local circumstances?

Twenty years ago, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) "set the framework for global digital cooperation with a vision to build people-centric, inclusive, and development-oriented information and knowledge societies". There were leading countries already making effective use of technology, lagging countries, with little access to technology and much talk about the closing the digital divide. Rapid and relentless technological innovation characterised the ensuing years bringing us to today, when the same countries are lagging and very few have actually been able to join the leading countries and the digital divide is as wide as ever. If we are going to achieve those lofty goals articulated 20+ years ago, we have to accelerate effective adoption of technology so that the lagging countries leverage the power of ICT to develop as the leading countries have done.

The Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation CTO) is the oldest and largest Commonwealth institution addressing information and communication technologies (ICT). Existing in many manifestations in its 123-year history, the CTO has remained consistent in its promotion of information and communications networks. In its current manifestation, the CTO's mandate is to promote and foster effective adoption and the use of ICT, accelerated digital transformation for social and economic development and the attainment of the Sustainable Development goals within the Commonwealth and beyond.

Building people-centric, inclusive, and development-oriented societies does not happen by chance. It takes people who genuinely care for others, compassion, collaboration, visionary servant leadership and political will. It requires recognition of the local circumstances and customisation of solutions to solve problems without harm to the environment, culture or people.

The CTO Is committed to the vision of a world in which people are connected meaningfully to the information and communications networks. We understand the power of strategic partnerships, and are prepared to collaborate and work with diverse organisations and stakeholders to realise the vision.

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Leaders TalkX: ICT Applications Unlocking the Full Potential of Digital - Part I

Recording: https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/472

Moderated by High-level Track Facilitator:
Mr. Shaharyar Jawaid, Senior ICT Specialist, Islamic Development Bank

UN Representative:
Ms. Sally Radwan, Chief Digital Officer, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Speakers:

1. **Bangladesh:** H.E. Mr. Zunaid Ahmed Palak, Minister, Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology
2. **Qatar**: Mr. Hassan Al-Sayed, Minister's Advisor, Chairman of the AI Committee, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology
3. **Iraq**: Eng. Bassam Salem Hussein, Head of Commissioners, Communications and Media Commission
4. **Türkiye**: Mr. Mahmut Esat Yıldırım, Head of Information Technologies Authority Department
5. **Universitat Autònoma De Barcelona**: Prof. Anna Matamala, Director of AccessCat Network, Professor and Director

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Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator

Vision and Priorities

The session highlighted fresh priorities of Government of Bangladesh evolving from Digital Bangladesh in 2009 to aspiring to become Smart Bangladesh Vision 2041, where Bangladesh plans to establish good governance, maintain accountability and transparency, promote innovation, and reduce inefficiency. The goal is to build a prosperous and happy Bangladesh, where technology serves as a catalyst for sustainable development and social progress.

Emerging Trends

The Digital Agenda 2030 of Qatar outlines a comprehensive roadmap for Qatar's digital future, focusing on six key pillars: digital infrastructure, digital government, digital economy, digital technology, digital society, and a robust database system. These pillars will accelerate technology adoption, foster digital economic growth, enhance innovation, and deliver excellent government services, all while empowering our society to thrive in an increasingly digital world. Qatar is aspiring to become a global technology hub leveraging the latest advancements such as 5G networks, artificial intelligence, digital twinning, cloud computing, and big data.

Opportunities / Key Challenges

Opportunities: Republic of Iraq's efforts call for cooperation between the public industrial sector and the private sector in the field of technology to use artificial intelligence as a means. The government facilitates these partnerships through a wide range of joint research between key institutions and provides support and technical support to projects involved in the development of artificial technology. Moreover, the government is adopting technology transfer programs and converting academic subscriptions into marketable commercial services. This is done by providing financial and technical support to emerging companies and small pioneering projects that enable them to use artificial technology in their products and services.

Key Challenges: ICT applications can provide benefits in many aspects of our lives: public administration, health, education, transport, culture, among others. However, there is one key aspect that needs to be considered to guarantee we all benefit from ICT applications: accessibility. Access to information and communication, which is directly linked to the Sustainable Development Goals, should be a driving force in digitalization. The needs of diverse users in terms of languages, cultures and formats should be considered. Some users communicate with spoken words, some with sign language, others with written text. However, access is still limited for persons with disabilities, language barriers or low digital literacy. In this context Academia initiatives like AccessCat play a key role. Academia can contribute through education, research and knowledge transfer to build --quoting the first lines of the WSIS Declaration of Principles-- a "people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society".

Case examples

Türkiye's National Mobile Alert System is an important part of the country's disaster management strategy, providing critical information to the public during emergencies. The system covers urban, rural, and remote areas nationwide and offers multilingual alerts to address various population groups. Authorized users send geo-targeted alerts to mobile devices over mobile operator infrastructure using methods such as the Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS), SMS, Cell Broadcasting (CBS), and Pre-Call Announcement. Real-time alert distribution provides immediate warnings in emergencies and continuous updates as situations evolve. The system integrates data from government agencies and real-time sources to ensure accuracy and relevance. Users can set the types of alerts they want to receive and their priority level, making notifications more meaningful and personally relevant. Geo-targeting ensures that users receive the most relevant information based on their location, enabling a more effective response to emergencies.

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BANGLADESH

H.E. Mr. Zunaid Ahmed Palak
Minister
Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology

Question:

Would you please share a couple of the ICT applications that you've introduced under the Digital Bangladesh agenda. And please also explain how those applications are impacting lives, works or incomes of the citizens in Bangladesh?

Distinguished delegates, esteemed dignitaries

It is a great privilege and honour to address this esteemed assembly at the World Summit on the Information Society. Today, I am before you as a proud custodian of our nation's remarkable journey from the ashes of war to the rise of a digital era.

Our story begins with the struggle for independence, led by the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. In 1971, under his visionary leadership, the people of Bangladesh fought bravely to break free from oppression and establish a sovereign state. Bangabandhu's dream was to build a Golden Bengal—a land of peace, prosperity, and progress.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in his short but impactful lifespan, laid the foundational stones for a progressive Bangladesh. He envisioned a nation that would not only be free politically but also advanced in terms of science and technology. His commitment to education, infrastructure, and economic development set the stage for future progress.

Fast forward to the present, it is under the leadership of his daughter, Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, that we are realizing Bangabandhu's dream in the digital age. Her vision of a "Digital Bangladesh" is a transformative agenda that aims to leverage technology to foster inclusive growth, enhance governance, and improve the quality of life for all citizens. We have achieved "Digital Bangladesh" in 2021 and we are now on our journey to become a Smart Bangladesh by 2041.

The journey towards Digital Bangladesh, initiated in 2009, has been nothing short of revolutionary. With a clear vision and strategic initiatives, we have made significant leaps in integrating information and communication technology (ICT) into all aspects of governance and daily life. This journey is characterized by key milestones and achievements that reflect our commitment to having the power of technology for national development.

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As we look back to the achievements of our country and the diplomats present, we recognize that our journey is part of a larger global movement towards digital transformation. The World Summit on the Information Society provides an invaluable platform for sharing experiences, learning from each other, and integrating partnerships that can drive the global digital agenda forward.

In line with Smart Bangladesh Vision 2041, we are committed to establishing good governance, maintaining accountability and transparency, promoting innovation, and reducing corruption. Our goal is to build a prosperous and happy Bangladesh, where technology serves as a catalyst for sustainable development and social progress.

The story of Bangladesh is one of resilience, vision, and innovation. From the liberation war led by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to the transformative leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, our nation has shown that with determination and the right vision, anything is possible.

As we continue to innovate and embrace the digital age, we remain committed to ensuring that no one is left behind.

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QATAR

Mr. Hassan Al-Sayed
Minister's Advisor, Chairman of the AI Committee
Ministry of Communications and Information Technology

Question:

What efforts State of Qatar is making towards the digital transformation, and how you are tackling the regulatory challenges pertaining the emerging technologies and AI?

Your excellences, distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

I am honored to have this opportunity to express our utmost gratitude for the fruitful cooperation of all concerned parties organizing the WSIS forum 2024.

The Digital Agenda 2030 outlines a comprehensive roadmap for our digital future, focusing on six key pillars: digital infrastructure, digital government, digital economy, digital technology, digital society, and a robust database system. These pillars will accelerate technology adoption, foster digital economic growth, enhance innovation, and deliver excellent government services, all while empowering our society to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

Our vision is to make Qatar a global technology hub, leveraging the latest advancements such as 5G networks, artificial intelligence, digital twinning, cloud computing, and big data. These technologies will help us achieve the goals of our National Vision 2030 and our National Development Strategy, fostering a diverse and competitive knowledge-based digital economy. We aim to encourage the private sector's role, driving innovation and entrepreneurship.

The Digital Agenda 2030 offers tremendous opportunities for growth and development. It promotes a future that is more efficient, effective, and interconnected, stimulating new pathways for growth and innovation. By adopting forward-thinking digital strategies, we will accelerate economic transformation and enhance our competitive edge, creating a vibrant digital economy that nurtures entrepreneurship and digital talent.

Additionally, Qatar is committed to adopting clean technologies, utilizing our abundant renewable energy resources, particularly solar energy, as part of our digital future. Prioritizing digitization is crucial for our national development.

WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024: High-Level Outcomes and Executive Brief

We recognize that emerging technologies, especially artificial intelligence, come with significant regulatory challenges. To address these, we are developing robust frameworks to ensure ethical AI use, data privacy, and cybersecurity. We are working closely with international organizations and experts to establish standards and best practices that safeguard our society while fostering innovation. Our regulatory approach is dynamic, adapting to the fast-paced advancements in technology to ensure we remain at the forefront of the digital revolution.

In closing, I would like to express our gratitude to the general secretary for hosting this forum, and to all attendees. We wish everyone the best for all the sessions to come.

Thank you.

WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024: High-Level Outcomes and Executive Brief

IRAQ

Eng. Bassam Salem Hussein
Head of Commissioners
Communications and Media Commission

Question:

Can you elaborate on Iraq's efforts to foster collaboration between the public and private sectors in AI research and development?

Republic of Iraq's efforts call for cooperation between the public industrial sector and the engineer in the field of technology, within a framework that includes several fields and mechanisms. It is considered a partnership between the public sectors to use artificial intelligence in this field. The government facilitates these partnerships through a wide range of joint research between key institutions and provides support and technical support to projects involved in the development of artificial technology.

Moreover, the government is adopting technology transfer programs and converting academic subscriptions into marketable commercial services. This is done by providing financial and technical support to emerging companies and small pioneering projects that enable them to use artificial technology in their products and services.

The establishment of innovation centres and incubators is one of the most important mechanisms that contribute to enhancing cooperation between the public and private sectors, as it provides a common environment for academics and industrialists to work together on developing artificial technology. These centres provide a platform for exchanging experiences and knowledge and providing professional and technical support to emerging projects in this field, which contributes to enhancing innovation and developing the technical industry in Iraq.

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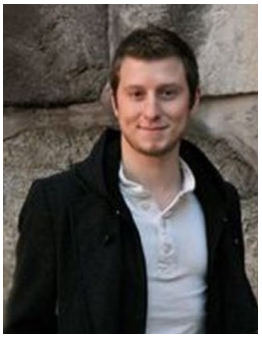
TÜRKIYE



Mr. Mahmut Esat Yıldırım
Head of Information Technologies Department,
Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK) of Türkiye

Question:

In our world, characterized by rapid environmental changes and the increasing frequency of natural disasters, the importance of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in disaster management cannot be overemphasized. Among these technologies, national mobile alert systems are emerging as critical tools for ensuring the safety of communities and the protection of ecosystems. By rapidly disseminating alerts and critical information, these systems empower individuals to take timely action in the face of imminent threats. Mr. Yildirim, can you give us an overview of your country's national mobile alert system and its key features?

Türkiye's National Mobile Alert System is an important part of the country's disaster management strategy, providing critical information to the public during emergencies. The system covers urban, rural, and remote areas nationwide and offers multilingual alerts to address various population groups. Authorized users send geo-targeted alerts to mobile devices over mobile operator infrastructure using methods such as the Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS), SMS, Cell Broadcasting (CBS), and Pre-Call Announcement.

Real-time alert distribution provides immediate warnings in emergencies and continuous updates as situations evolve. The system integrates data from government agencies and real-time sources to ensure accuracy and relevance. Geo-targeted alerts are sent based on the user's location, and personalization options allow individuals to adjust alert preferences, increasing the personal relevance of notifications. The availability of user-specific settings enhances the system's effectiveness. Users can set the types of alerts they want to receive and their priority level, making notifications more meaningful and personally relevant. Geo-targeting ensures that users receive the most relevant information based on their location, enabling a more effective response to emergencies.

This comprehensive approach enables citizens to act quickly and effectively during emergencies, increasing the resilience and safety of communities. By combining modern technology with disaster management practices, Türkiye's National Mobile Alert System offers an effective method to protect public safety and provide timely responses to various threats. The wide coverage of the system makes it possible to reach people in every corner of the country. Comprehensive communication methods offer more detailed and

richer content using SMS as well as more advanced technologies such as push notifications for smartphones. This allows citizens to better understand what to do during an emergency.

Thanks to its robust infrastructure and redundant communication channels, Türkiye's National Mobile Alert System remains operational even during intense situations. These features increase the system's reliability during emergencies and ensure that the public is always informed.

In conclusion, Türkiye's National Mobile Alert System is a comprehensive and effective tool designed to ensure the safety of citizens and provide rapid responses to emergencies. Utilizing modern technology enhances public safety and makes societies more resilient to various threats.

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ACCESSCAT NETWORK, UNIVERSITAT AUTÒNOMA DE BARCELONA

Prof. Anna Matamala

Professor and Director

Question:

From your perspective as an Academia representative and accessibility expert, can you highlight some challenges in ICT applications and how Academia can contribute to overcome these challenges?

ICT applications can provide benefits in many aspects of our lives: public administration, health, education, transport, culture, among others. However, there is one key aspect that needs to be considered to guarantee we all benefit from ICT applications: **accessibility**.

Access to information and communication, which is directly linked to the Sustainable Development Goals, should be a driving force in digitalization. The needs of diverse users in terms of languages, cultures and formats should be considered. Some users communicate with spoken words, some with sign languages, others with written text. However, access is still limited for persons with disabilities, language barriers or low digital literacy.

In this context Academia plays a key role. I represent AccessCat, a knowledge transfer network on accessible communication, and TransMedia Catalonia, a research group from the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB).

UAB is a public university in Catalonia with a strong social commitment. UAB is leader in international rankings and aims to improve society through training, knowledge creation and knowledge transfer. From an academic perspective, three aspects are central.

Education: digital education is key, and this includes digital accessibility. A remarkable effort is the ATHENA project, led by the European Disability Forum, with participation of the Autonomous University of Barcelona. This project is exploring how to integrate universal design and accessibility in higher education curricula, so that future professionals from any field have received training on universal design and accessibility.

Research is at the core of universities. We investigate new solutions and provide evidence. TransMedia Catalonia has been researching accessibility taking into account technological developments. From analogue to digital television, from connected television to immersive media and blockchain, TransMedia

Catalonia has explored access services such as subtitles, audio description, sign language interpreting, easy-to-understand language, and can prove what works best for end users. TransMedia Catalonia also innovates by researching the potential of previously unrelated fields such as sustainability and accessibility (GreenScent project, Clear Climate) or exploring new access services (WEL).

But this research needs to go beyond academic fora, and this is why **Knowledge Transfer** is the third key aspect. Industry-academia-citizen collaboration will allow our research results to have societal impact. A good example is AccessCat. The AccessCat Network promotes knowledge transfer and supports 15 research groups working on accessible communication. AccessCat gives visibility to the technologies, services and educational resources generated by the groups through an online Catalogue, funds disruptive solutions, provides training on knowledge transfer and gives financial support for awareness-raising activities, international missions, and standardization work. In this regard, the standardization work developed by TransMedia Catalonia at the ITU is worth mentioning: for the last year the ITU Focus Group on Metaverse has been discussing the challenges and opportunities posed by this disruptive area of innovation, and TransMedia Catalonia has contributed to the discussion with multiple deliverables on how to make virtual worlds accessible.

Overall, academia can contribute through education, research and knowledge transfer to build --quoting the first lines of the WSIS Declaration of Principles-- a "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society".

Leaders TalkX: Click to Govern: Inclusive and Efficient E-services

Recording: https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/470

Moderated by High-level Track Facilitator:
Ms. Mei Lin Fung, Co-Chair, People-Centered Internet

WSIS Action Lines Facilitator:
Mr. Robert Opp, Chief Digital Officer, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Speakers:

1. **Philippines:** H.E. Mr. Ivan John Uy, Secretary Department of Information and Communications Technology
2. **Slovenia**: H.E. Dr. Emilija Stojmenova Duh, Minister, Ministry of Digital Transformation
3. **Kenya**: Ms. Mary Mungai, CBS, Chairperson of The Board of Directors, Communications Authority
4. **Somalia**: Mr. Mustafa Yasin Sheikh, Director General, National Communications Authority
5. **Senegal**: Ms. Fatou Binetou Ndiaye, Secretary General, Ministry of Communication, Telecommunications and Digital Economy

WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024: High-Level Outcomes and Executive Brief

Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator

Overview / Key Challenges

Challenges for governments are high in providing good e-services that responsively meet citizens'

Needs:

- Constantly improving reliable responsive eServices ease of access/ease of use
- Bridging divides language & digital literacy, age, urban/rural, physical/mental spectrum
- Serving all inclusively, appropriately and fairly with Safety, Privacy, Dignity and Respect
- Earning and keeping the trust of citizens and their families, communities, businesses
- Encouraging participation and engagement with citizens by responsively receiving feedback
- Finding the finance for building infrastructure for delivering e-Services

Case Examples

The **Philippines** is improving quality of life of citizens with "Bayang Digital ang Bagong Pilipinas"— the New Philippines is a Digital Nation – cutting redtape so citizen feedback quickly gets to the person who can act on it.

Slovenia stands out for people-centred digital services increasingly responsive to the needs of underserved people like the elderly and differently abled, and proactively improving by sharing and learning with other countries.

Kenyan eServices show citizens they are valued and cared for. Integrating culture by practical publicprivate partnerships, the government creates awareness of digital opportunities by practically improving citizens' daily lives.

Senegal sets up regulatory sandboxes to participatively design, rapidly test and deploy secure eServices that strives to earn and keeps the trust of citizens by deep attention to local culture, values & responsively acting on feedback.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the increasing maturity of eGovernment in Asia, Africa and Europe is clearly demonstrated in this session devoted to WSIS Action Line 7. The value of the WSIS forum in bringing together countries from around the world to exchange practical stories of how they are addressing solving common challenges is enhanced by the structure of numbered WSIS Action lines – each country can find the specific issue they want to address and look at all the way that countries are solving them. Each year at WSIS the encylopaedia of practice grows by hundreds of stories creating a practical playbook for digital transformation that speeds up success and reduces the wasted funds and frustration of trial and error. WSIS is a trading post and social network which delivers value all year around.

WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024: High-Level Outcomes and Executive Brief

PHILIPPINES

H.E. Mr. Ivan John Uy
Secretary
Department of Information and Communications Technology

Question:

What are the Government's initiatives to drive digitalization in the Philippines?

Your excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. The Philippines is privileged to join fellow member states on this panel in charting a future driven by digitalization.

We firmly believe in the transformative power of digitalization to propel economic growth and enhance the delivery of public services, a conviction underscored by Philippine President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr., who has prioritized Digital Transformation as a key agenda of his administration. This is a welcome paradigm shift because, for decades, the ordinary Filipino's interaction with the government has been marred by cumbersome and convoluted processes exacerbated by bureaucratic red tape, fragmented online platforms, excessive paperwork, and long queues—resulting in delayed and unsatisfactory public service delivery.

The Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) stands at the forefront of leveraging digital technologies to enhance the quality of life for Filipinos. With 21 eGovernment solutions already introduced, including the eGovPH App—an accessible super app for government services—and eLGU—a platform streamlining the issuance of licenses, permits, and certificates at the municipal level—the DICT is accelerating efforts to boost participative governance nationwide.

The Department of Information and Communications Technology or DICT stands at the forefront of leveraging digital technologies to enhance the quality of life for Filipinos. With 21 eGovernment solutions already introduced in just under two years, including the eGovPH App—an accessible super app for government services—and eLGU—a platform streamlining the issuance of licenses, permits, and certificates at the municipal level—the DICT is accelerating efforts to boost participative governance nationwide. The eGovPH App is just one of the few countries in the world to introduce a one-stop-shop platform where citizens can access public services, apply for government permits, and transact with public officers in the convenience of their homes.

In addition to eLGU, the eGovPH App also features various services such as eGovPay, eReceipt, eTravel, eHealth, and eReport, among others. Allow me to give a short overview of these key services:

eGovPay is a government payment gateway designed to simplify payment processing, reduce costs, and enhance customer experiences;

eReceipt is a digital platform that enables businesses to issue, manage and store electronic receipts for transactions made with customers;

eTravel simplifies travel to 15 international airports and seaports and has served over 20 million passengers as of date;

eHealth improves healthcare services by offering online doctor visits, keeping patient records in one place, analyzing health data, and simplifying insurance claims;

and eReport is a customer feedback component where users can submit complaints, reports, and concerns about the government. Our citizens can also report crimes as they happen in their community with just a few clicks. It is important to note that during the simulation, the fastest response time recorded through the eReport reached 1 minute and 37 seconds.

The DICT is committed to enabling a digital nation that harnesses ICT to improve government efficiency, secure citizens online, and provide opportunities for growth in the digital realm. We previously launched "Bayang Digital ang Bagong Pilipinas"—the New Philippines is a Digital Nation— as our overarching theme for all our campaigns, distilling our shared commitment to realizing a technologically advanced society where no Filipino is left behind, especially those living in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas and the marginalized.

In closing, I want to underscore the unwavering dedication of the Philippines to realize a Bayang Digital. We are committed to collaborating closely with the ITU to ensure a more prosperous and sustainable digital future for all.

Thank you for your attention, and I eagerly anticipate the fruitful collaborations and partnerships that will emerge from this session.

WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024: High-Level Outcomes and Executive Brief

SLOVENIA

H.E. Dr. Emilija Stojmenova Duh
Minister
Ministry of Digital Transformation

Question:

How does the Slovenian Public Service Strategy 2030 contribute to inclusive and efficient e-services?

[MISSING STATEMENT]

WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024: High-Level Outcomes and Executive Brief

KENYA

Ms. Mary Mungai, CBS
Chairperson of The Board of Directors
Communications Authority of Kenya

Question:

What strategies can developing countries adopt to derive value from inclusive and efficient e-services?

Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Secretary General, International Telecommunication Union

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen

It is a great honour to speak at this important forum on inclusive and efficient e-services, particularly on what strategies developing countries can adopt in order to derive value from their digital inclusivity efforts.

To begin with, it is crucial to recognise that although inclusive and efficient e-services present tremendous opportunities for nations globally, the aspiration remains unattainable for developing countries due to the practical and distinctive challenges they occasionally confront

Many countries, including Kenya, have to overcome unique challenges ranging from weak ICT infrastructure, low digital literacy levels, inadequate financial resources, inadequate legal and regulatory frameworks, a lack of skilled personnel, and an ever-expanding digital divide.

That's why we have to align with global dynamics that influence how much value we get from our investments to realise inclusive and efficient e-services. What, then, must we do to overcome these challenges? Five things come to mind.

Firstly, we need to recognise our unique circumstances and develop approaches that are in line with our needs and priorities. This means we must adopt a comprehensive approach that addresses infrastructure, skills, policies, institutions, and citizen engagement.

Secondly, we must prioritize initiatives and ensure the availability of financial resources as we create frameworks to roll out e-services. We can achieve this through practical mechanisms like public-private partnerships.

Thirdly, we must improve digital literacy through capacity building among public sector employees and end-users, as well as come up with legal safeguards on critical issues such as cybersecurity and data privacy. Also, we must figure out how to integrate our cultural realities into the ecosystem, improve critical ICT infrastructure, and raise awareness of the immense opportunities that e-services can bring.

Fourth, countries should examine the quality of e-services, with a focus on meeting and exceeding their citizens' expectations. We must make it easy for citizens to interact with the services, particularly those with disabilities and the elderly.

Inclusivity means being mindful of people's diversity and ensuring that everyone, regardless of their social standing, feels valued and cared for. That way, we can create an environment of trust and fulfilment for the citizens.

Lastly, we must develop strong policies for domestic digital development and establish clear positions on issues like data governance, which can give developing countries leverage in the global digital order to promote social justice and anti-discrimination.

In conclusion, developing nations can maximise the value of inclusive and efficient e-services, increase citizen engagement, and establish an enabling environment by implementing these strategies. In order to foster a more inclusive digital economy, additional critical aspects such as digital divides, capacity development, and international cooperation must be considered.

I therefore thank the ITU for providing us with various forums like this where we can discuss our collective digital transformation agenda and come up with quick solutions by putting our heads together

Thank you.

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SOMALIA

Mr. Mustafa Yasin Sheikh
Director General
National Communications Authority

Question:

What are the main barriers to adopting e-government services in developing countries, and what strategies are most effective in ensuring these services reach all population segments, including those in remote areas?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor to address this esteemed assembly at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)+20 Forum. As we discuss the critical role of e-government services in fostering inclusive development, we must confront the barriers hindering their adoption in developing countries and identify strategies to ensure these services benefit all population segments, including those in remote areas.

Barriers to E-Government Adoption:

1. Infrastructure Deficiency: The lack of robust ICT infrastructure is a significant barrier. Limited internet connectivity and unreliable power supply create a digital divide, particularly in rural areas.

2. Digital Literacy: Many citizens, especially in marginalized communities, lack the necessary skills to navigate digital platforms, limiting their ability to access critical services.

3. Policy and Regulatory Challenges: Inconsistent policies and regulatory frameworks can stifle innovation and slow the deployment of e-government services. Coherent and adaptable regulations are crucial.

4. Trust and Security Concerns: Data privacy and cybersecurity concerns can deter the adoption of e-government services. Ensuring robust data protection and building public trust in digital systems is essential.

Effective Strategies for Inclusive E-Government Services:

1. Infrastructure Investment: Prioritizing investments in ICT infrastructure is necessary. Public-private partnerships can expand broadband connectivity and enhance mobile network coverage, particularly in underserved regions.

2. Capacity Building and Digital Literacy Programs: Comprehensive digital literacy initiatives targeting all population segments are crucial. Partnering with educational institutions and NGOs can amplify these efforts.

3. Policy Harmonization and Innovation: Coherent and adaptive policies that encourage innovation and reduce bureaucratic barriers are essential. Regulatory sandboxes can facilitate the rapid deployment of new technologies.

4. Building Trust through Security and Transparency: Ensuring the highest cybersecurity and data protection standards is fundamental. Transparent communication about data use can build public trust, while secure authentication processes enhance confidence in e-government services.

5. Inclusive Design and Local Solutions: E-government services must be designed with inclusivity at their core. Engaging local communities in the design process ensures that services meet their needs. Using local languages and culturally relevant content can further enhance accessibility.

In conclusion, while the barriers to adopting e-government services in developing countries are significant, they are not unbeatable. By investing in infrastructure, fostering digital literacy, harmonizing policies, ensuring security, and embracing inclusive design, we can create a digital ecosystem that leaves no one behind. Together, we can harness the power of technology to drive sustainable development and improve the lives of all citizens, regardless of their location.

Thank you.

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SENEGAL

Ms. Fatou Binetou Ndiaye
Secretary General
Ministry of Communication, Telecommunications and Digital Economy

Question:

What is the place of "e-governance" policy in the Senegal's Strategy? In this context, can you share "e-gov" projects carried out in Senegal?

Mr President of the Conference

Madam Secretary General of the ITU

Mr. Moderator/Facilitator

Ladies and Gentlemen Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen Ambassadors,

Ladies and Gentlemen, General Directors.

Ladies and Gentlemen, delegates in your ranks and grades,

It is particularly pleasant for me, on behalf of Mr. Aliou SALL, Minister responsible for Digital Affairs, on behalf of the people and the government of the Republic of Senegal to participate in the 2024 edition of the World Summit Forum on the Information Society, a leading forum to debate the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as a tool contributing to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda (SDGs).

Ms Moderator,

Allow me to remind you that by adopting the "Senegal Digital 2025" or "SN 2025" strategy in 2016, our country took a step towards politically taking charge of the opportunity to accelerate development and integration. that ICT offers in a world of information and the knowledge economy.

The "SN 2025" strategy has the following vision:

"In 2025, digital technology for all and for all uses, with a dynamic and innovative private sector in an efficient ecosystem."

It is broken down into three (3) prerequisites and four (4) priority strategic areas of intervention.

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To answer your question which is relevant, I would like to highlight axis-2 which is as important as the others, namely "An Administration connected to the service of citizens and businesses" with mainly three (03) strategic objectives, to know :

- Improve efficiency and synergy in administration;
- Accelerate the digitalization of administrative procedures;
- Improve transparency and citizen participation.

It should be noted that each strategic objective of axis-2 but of the other axes of "SN 2025" is supported through several actions (projects) and activities.

In this regard, I would like to point out that in the axis-2 project portfolio, significant achievements have already been made or are in progress, in accordance with the guidelines set out in "action line 7 of the WSIS: ICT applications and their contribution to all areas.

In concrete terms, these are major projects to modernize the Administration, in particular:

● **GAINDE:** Automated Management of Customs Information and Exchanges is a strategic platform for Senegal customs: management of customs clearance, goods and goods.

● **GIRAFE** (Integrated Management of Administration and State Civil Servant Resources): application for the management of human resources in the civil service, the establishment of a unified file of data for State agents, the development of a single nomenclature of reference data and the management of budget allocations.

● **SIGTAS** (Integrated Tax and Similar Management System): it is an integrated information system for tax administration;

● **Electronic commerce:** launch of two online platforms E-Komkom and E-commercesenegal.sn in June 2020

● **Dematerialization of administrative procedures:**

● **Télédac** for building authorization applications to further reduce the delivery times for this act, currently set at 28 days for simple files and 40 days for complex files;

● **online registration** for the ENA entrance exam and **online registration of baccalaureate holders** in universities and national training centers;

● the electronic customs clearance procedure (full GAINDE);

● **the application** for employment in the public service;

● online VAT declaration (e-tax);

● The SenegalService site which provides all the information and prerequisites concerning all administrative procedures for citizens (natural or legal persons)

● publication of public contracts;

Ms. Moderator, Ladies/Gentlemen

To conclude my speech, I would like to draw the attention of the audience to the need to strengthen cooperation between all stakeholders to build an inclusive and sustainable information society for all, in accordance with the major guidelines clearly formulated in the WSIS action line -11.

Mr. Alioune SALL, Minister responsible for Digital, through my voice, would finally like to_thank the International Telecommunications Union and all of its partners, for the constant support to the Digital sector, but also for this wonderful organization of the 2024 edition of the WSIS Forum.

Our thanks also go to the host country Switzerland, for the quality of the welcome and the optimal conditions of our stay.

I wish the WSIS Forum 2024 every success.

Thank you all for your very kind attention.

WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024: High-Level Outcomes and Executive Brief

Leaders TalkX: Digital Advancing Sustainable Development: A Trusted Connected World

Recording: https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/507

Moderated by High-level Track Facilitator:
Prof. Tim Unwin, Emeritus Professor of Geography and Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair in ICT4D, Royal Holloway University of London

Speakers:

1. **Malaysia:** H.E. Mr. Gobind Singh Deo, Minister, Ministry of Digital
2. **Greece:** Dr. Konstantinos Masselos, President Hellenic Telecommunications and Post Commission
3. **Uruguay:** Dr. Mercedes Aramendia Falco, Presidenta de Directorio Unidad Reguladora de Servicios de Comunicaciones (URSEC)
4. **Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA):** Dr. Charles Noir, Vice-President, Community Investment, Policy & Advocacy
5. **European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association (ETNO):** Ms. Lise Fuhr, Director General

WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024: High-Level Outcomes and Executive Brief

Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator

Vision

Much has been achieved, but much remains to be done if we are to use digital tech sustainably to serve the needs of the world's poorest and most marginalised people and communities. At the heart of our future vision is the need to build trust between all those of good intent working with and through the Internet. Digital infrastructure and networks of the future will be about the new services these networks will make possible – and as we progress towards offering new, complex, and socioeconomically transforming services, as we integrate these services in our day-to-day activities, the importance of cyber-security will truly shine to its full potential.

WSIS+20: 20 Years of Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities

The oral and written presentations crafted for this session focused especially on the success achieved by the countries and organisations represented, with highlighted examples noted below:

- **Achievements**

CIRA provides cybersecurity services to over 500 organizations across Canada and DNS and registry services to organizations globally.

ETNO has championed a multistakeholder approach.

Uruguay is a leader in the adoption of renewable energy and is working on decarbonizing transport and industry, developing a green hydrogen economy, and making more efficient use of the electricity system.

The development of telecommunications infrastructures globally has seen extraordinary progress Important role played by the technical community in advancing sustainable development.

- **Challenges (many of these are also opportunities)**

The continuing need to focus on meaningful connectivity. Cybersecurity is essential to protect networks, systems, and data, and to ensure trust in the use of digital technologies. It is essential to distinguish between the coverage gap and the usage gap. We need universal quality connectivity and affordable access to devices. We need to do more to ensure that all genders can access and use digital tech safely, wisely and securely.

- **Opportunities**

IGF Leadership working on the Internet We Want principles (whole and open, universal and inclusive, free-flowing and trustworthy, safe and secure and rights-respecting) Potential for global DNS infrastructure in progress towards SDG objectives. Governments, academics, civil society, the private sector and the technical community—to continue to meaningfully shape the governance of global network. Education and development of digital skills are essential – and offer many opportunities for new technology deployments.

The future of employment requires new skills and retraining. Regulation has to be adequate, adaptable, and flexible to facilitate and promote digital innovation, empowering people and putting them at the center. In the European Union the investment needs to achieve the EU Digital Decade Policy Programme connectivity targets of 2030 are optimistically estimated to be larger than 200 Billion euros – many opportunities for investment and deployment.

Towards the Summit of the Future / GDC and Beyond

The GDC was not a topic discussed explicitly, but there was an underlying current that any new processes should not reinvent the wheel. Existing processes such as WSIS, IGF and NET Mundial seem to be working quite well. The lack of any detailed discussion on the GDC might suggest that its potential benefits remain unclear.

Fresh priorities

Much has been achieved, but greater (and more novel) emphasis could be placed on Conceptualising sustainability in terms of environmental, financial and social-economical sustainability.

It is crucially important that we move beyond a "carbon" and "climate change" focus to a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the interactions between digital technologies and the physical environment Policy and regulatory action are required to address investment challenges and achieve digital infrastructure deployment targets.

Cybersecurity is becoming ever more important for trust to be maintained and needs to become prioritised by governments, the private sector, civil society organisations and individual citizens.

Emerging trends

There are many emerging trends, but two seem to be particularly important:

- For economic growth it is important to maximise the opportunities for competition. In principle the most important driver in a market remains competition as it creates incentives for innovation, investment in infrastructure and better services to consumer.
- AI and Quantum Computing provide very serious threats with respect to cybersecurity, but they also provides opportunities to mitigate these potential harms. Building trust is essential for ensuring that everyone can benefit from digital tech.

Links to WSIS Action Lines and Sustainable Development Goals

The session addressed most WSIS Action Lines and all SDGs (explicitly in one response) and especially quality education (SDG 4), economic growth (SDG 8) and climate action (SDG 13).

Case Examples

Many examples of good practices were shared, but two specific cases are worth noting:

• Plan Ceibal (Uruguay)

• European Commission White Paper "How to master Europe's digital infrastructure needs?" which introduces a number of regulatory proposals to address digital infrastructure deployment, to attract investment and foster innovation.

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MALAYSIA

H.E. Mr. Gobind Singh Deo
Minister
Ministry of Digital

Question:

As Malaysia's Minister of Digital tasked with overseeing the nation's digital ecosystem, how do you approach the challenge of crafting effective policies and regulations in a constantly shifting technological landscape? What strategies do you adopt to ensure that policies and regulations are agile enough to keep pace with technological advancements while still providing adequate safeguards for citizens?

In December 2024, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, YAB Dato Seri Anwar bin Ibrahim announced the establishment of a new Ministry of Digital in Malaysia - the first of its kind in the ASEAN region - underscoring the country's commitment to proactive digital governance in an era of rapid technological advancement.

Helming a new digital ministry at a time when emerging technologies are fundamentally reshaping the way we live, work and play is, indeed, a fine balancing act. The task of harnessing the capabilities while mitigating the risks of advanced technologies like generative AI, cloud computing, blockchain and edge computing often involve multi-dimensional trade-offs across a range of policy and regulatory levers. While we do not claim to have all the answers to the complexities of digital governance, my ministry has found success in a focused approach underpinned by three essential layers: digital infrastructure, regulation, and talent. These three layers form the backbone of a robust and lasting foundation that supports the evolution of technologies over time.

Digital Infrastructure

Malaysia has demonstrated the right policy mix over the years, coupled with strong implementation, to emerge as a global leader in the digital infrastructure space. In terms of connectivity, Malaysia boasts an award-winning 5G network helmed by Digital Nasional Berhad (DNB), an agency under the Ministry of Digital. Malaysia's 5G coverage has reached over 80 per cent COPA, and has recorded 11.9 million 5G service subscriptions, representing an adoption rate of 35.4 per cent.

Today, DNB continues to drive cross-sectoral adoption of 5G in Malaysia, with a planned 30 enterprise use cases to be rolled out soon - a showcase of the operational and cost efficiencies, technological innovations and productivity gains that can potentially be enabled by 5G.

Furthermore, the AI boom has kickstarted a global race for compute, accelerating demand for land, energy, and water resources to power next-generation AI data centres. Malaysia is strategically positioned to capitalise on this trend and emerge as the premier data centre hub in ASEAN ☐ with its abundance of resources and favourable geopolitics for investors seeking diversification.

To this end, Malaysia has attracted RM76 billion (USD 16.1 billion) in investments related to data centre development within the last three years. 17 Notable investments by global technology firms include those by Microsoft (USD 2.2 billion) - the largest investment by the company among ASEAN peers - and Amazon Web Services (USD 6 billion), amongst others.

Regulation

Developing world-class digital infrastructure is only the first part of the digital governance puzzle. The Ministry of Digital also recognises the importance of a cohesive regulatory framework in facilitating a flourishing and investment-ready digital economy.

To this end, Malaysia is actively involved in shaping digital economy cooperation at the ASEAN level, via ongoing negotiations on the highly anticipated Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA). DEFA is forecasted to unlock up to USD 2 trillion in value for the ASEAN digital economy by 2030 through harmonised trade rules, interoperability standards, and enhanced collaboration with other member states.

Closer to home, the Ministry of Digital successfully tabled a new Cyber Security Bill 2024 during Malaysia's recent parliamentary sitting, ensuring the protection and resilience of Malaysia's National Critical Information Infrastructure (NCII) against cyber threats and attacks. This act establishes governance structures, measures, and procedures to manage cyber threats to NCII, and outlines a licensing framework for cybersecurity service providers.

Meanwhile, the Department of Personal Data Protection (JPDP) under the Ministry of Digital is in the final stages of drafting a bill to amend the Personal Data Protection Act 2010 [Act 709]. Concurrently, a national data sharing bill is being drafted by Jabatan Digital Negara (JDN), another agency under the Ministry of Digital.

Collectively, these efforts are integral components of the ministry's overarching goals to foster a holistic regulatory environment that meet the needs of citizens, businesses, and investors in the digital sphere.

Talent

To fully realise the potential of the digital economy, the Ministry of Digital believes that investments in digital infrastructure and a robust regulatory framework must be matched by a strong supply of digitally savvy, future-ready talent.

To this end, the Ministry of Digital, through its agencies, supports a range of capacity building programs and initiatives targeting various segments of society.

One example is 42 KL which, as part of the global 42 network, offers tuition-free computer science education to students within a peer-to-peer learning environment. To date, 42 KL has impacted over 1,200 students, 60% of whom have had no coding experience.

Besides that, the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC), an agency under the Ministry of Digital, has established a Premier Digital Tech Institutions (PDTI) initiative to address the shortage

of local talent in the digital technology industry. The program facilitates access between industry players and skilled digital talent by linking businesses with institutions of higher learning.

Furthermore, the AI untuk Rakyat (roughly translated as AI for Citizens) initiative is an online module aimed at equipping citizens with basic digital literacy in the realm of artificial intelligence. The program garnered 1 million sign-ups in less than 4 months, showcasing growing interest in digital literacy among Malaysian citizens.

Concluding Thoughts

In steering Malaysia's digital trajectory, the Ministry of Digital acknowledges the fine balance required to leverage emerging technologies while mitigating potential risks. Through a targeted policy and regulatory approach centred on digital infrastructure, regulation, and talent development, we are committed to laying a strong foundation to propel Malaysia as a digital leader in ASEAN and beyond.

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GREECE

Dr. Konstantinos Masselos
President
Hellenic Telecommunications and Post Commission

Question:

Digital infrastructure is the platform for digital transformation and sustainable development. Which are the challenges as regards the deployment of high quality digital infrastructure, in particular as regards cybersecurity?

Digital transformation facilitates the improvement of the existing services and products, and the introduction of new ones to meet the fast-changing requirements of the market, thus ensuring sustainable development based on constant innovation.

Digital infrastructure including connectivity, cloud, computing, security, storage, software as a service and others enables digital transformation and connects people around the world.

When considering future digital infrastructure, we should not forget sustainability, so the call is to think about the future of sustainable digital infrastructure.

- Environmentally sustainable - delivering lower energy consumption
- Financially sustainable - no need for subsidies to run day-to-day operations and maintenance
- Socio-economically sustainable. To the benefit of societies and economies. Sustainable by making our cities smarter and safer, together with enabling small businesses to innovate and large businesses becoming more efficient

The deployment of digital infrastructure is capital intensive. For example, in the European Union the investment needs to achieve the EU Digital Decade Policy Programme connectivity targets of 2030 are optimistically estimated to be larger than 200 BEuros.

From a Regulators point of view, in principle the most important driver in a market is competition as it creates incentives for innovation, investment in infrastructure and better services to consumers. For example, the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC) include among their objectives both efficient investment and competition.

- Investment particularly targeted to Very High-Capacity Networks (VHCNs) infrastructure still complemented by regulation, where necessary and

- Infrastructure-based competition with the rationale that bottlenecks and barriers to entry remain at the infrastructure level. On that respect several new (at that point) provisions of the EECC pointed at the direction of incentivizing investment in VHCNs, through lighter regulation.

Along with promoting the interests of the citizens, by ensuring connectivity and the widespread availability and take-up of VHCNs, inter alia by enabling maximum benefits in terms of choice, price and quality on the basis of effective competition.

Policy and regulatory action is required to address investment challenges and achieve digital infrastructure deployment targets. The priorities should be to:

- create friendly environment to incentivize investments,
- reduce infrastructure deployment costs (e.g. civil engineering costs for telecom networks deployment) including optimization of relevant administrative procedures
- address the demand side in order to make infrastructure accessible (competitively priced in a challenging economic environment of high inflation and high interest rates) for the end users, but also financially sustainable in the long run
- achieve economies of scale that ensure reasonable returns for those investing while still achieving competitive prices for the end-users. A tough exercise for our ex-ante and ex-post frameworks.

The recently published by the European Commission White Paper "How to master Europe's digital infrastructure needs?" introduces a number of regulatory proposals to address digital infrastructure deployment, to attract investment and foster innovation including:

- Creation of a level playing field in the converged telecommunications – cloud ecosystem
- Harmonization across the EU when it comes to market entry, spectrum authorization processes and security/ resilience.
- Access policy for fiber networks including a proposal for a pan-European wholesale access product, no recommended markets susceptible to ex ante regulation to promote investments and emphasis on copper switch off.
- Cross-border consolidation (including the idea of a pan-European core network) as a solution against market fragmentation.

When considering regulatory frameworks for the digital infrastructure of the future it is essential to consider vision for digital infrastructure of the future. Digital infrastructure and networks of the future will be about the new services these networks will make possible – and as we progress towards offering new, complex, and socioeconomically transforming services, as we integrate these services in our day-to-day activities, the importance of cyber-security will truly shine to its full potential.

Future services will not need 'just' a faster version of our current type of network. They will need a new type of Secure and Resilient network. They will need a new, Software Defined type of network. They will need 'Network Slicing' kind of services in 5G language. They will need a different type of Quality of Service. They will need us to go beyond Best Effort networks or 'just' encrypted ones.

These software-defined, new-services carrying, future networks will need to get hardware-level supply-chain traceability to avoid having our ultra-flexible ICT infrastructure from getting 'poisoned' in its very own 'silicon roots', compromising all concepts of cyber-security we talk about.

Semiconductors (Integrated Circuits) are the foundation technology on which telecommunications networks and digital infrastructure are built. Is there room for rethinking cybersecurity in semiconductor scale, or is it a too concentrated industry for almost anyone to have a say in it?

It is very true that performance critical - so cybersecurity critical too - semiconductors are leading edge node semiconductors, practically only made by a handful (maybe only three) companies around the world.

Building a leading-edge node semiconductor fab requires a 10-20 billion USD investment, and that is the 'relatively easy' part of the cost because manufacturing at nanoscale needs a large ecosystem of world

class engineers and scientists to go along with it, so it really looks and certainly feels like an impossible endeavour. However, does everything else really make sense if the hardware we use is compromised?

The task really looks and certainly feels impossible, but we need to think it through!

Introducing unique features in (otherwise) standard silicon for secure chip identification or encryption key storage, IS a fair compromise AND something that can be done and probably should be done. Thank you.

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URUGUAY

Dr. Mercedes Aramendia Falco
Presidenta de Directorio
Unidad Reguladora de Servicios de Comunicaciones (URSEC)

Question:

What successful cases from Uruguay would you highlight that contribute to sustainable development?

Communications Services Regulatory Unit

The universalization of connectivity and new technologies has changed the way we do things. We innovate, we use resources more efficiently, and we are closer, but we still need to minimize gaps and work together to achieve sustainable development.

1. We need universal quality connectivity and affordable access to devices: We need to connect everyone and everything, as well as universalize access to affordable devices. Uruguay currently has 94% of the territory covered with LTE (4G) technology, and more than 95% with 3G coverage, 5G technology is expanding, with a presence in all departmental capitals, and we have more than 90% of homes with fiber optics. Also, more than 92% of the population has access to a smartphone and almost the entire population has a device with internet access at home.

2. Education and development of digital skills: It is essential to participate fully in the information society. Uruguay has been carrying out the Ceibal Plan since 2007, it has been transforming, changing the focus, and is currently the State's center for educational innovation with digital technology, which promotes the integration of technology into education to improve learning and boost innovation, inclusion, and personal growth.

3. Equity and more opportunities for all: Although there is no gender difference in Internet use in Uruguay, it is true that in certain areas, such as rural areas, women still have fewer development opportunities. In this sense, active policies are being implemented to develop women's digital skills, especially in rural areas, given that there is still a division between men and women in terms of the jobs they can access. In this way, by improving digital skills, they are given tools to perform various tasks, increase productivity, and improve their living conditions.

4. The future of employment requires new skills and retraining: With the rapid technological evolution, the workforce needs to adapt their skills, while making new ways of working more flexible. In Uruguay, continuous training and retraining programs are being implemented to enable workers to acquire skills in

emerging areas such as artificial intelligence, data analysis, and information technologies. Teleworking is also regulated, providing flexibility, security, and guarantees.

5. Digital Security & Trust: Cybersecurity is essential to protect networks, systems, and data, and to ensure trust in the use of digital technologies. People need to know how to protect, detect, respond, and recover from any incident, developing a culture of security that impacts digital trust. Various awareness-raising campaigns are being carried out, while work is being done on a National Cybersecurity Strategy and various Bills.

6. Green technology and climate change: Green technology helps us to fight and better adapt to climate change, and to make a more efficient and intelligent use of resources. Uruguay is a leader in the adoption of renewable energy and is working on decarbonizing transport and industry, developing a green hydrogen economy, and making more efficient use of the electricity system. It is also working on the management of waste electrical and electronic equipment.

7. Digital government: Participation is key to governance and sustainable development, and ICTs help us to bring people closer and give them better access to public services. Uruguay is a regional leader in digital government and has implemented the Uruguay Digital Agenda to achieve an inclusive and sustainable digital transformation.

8. Health, more access and facilities: ICTs have much to contribute to the health sector, to improve the quality and continuity of care for citizens. In Uruguay, telemedicine has been developed and regulated as a provision of health services, to improve efficiency, and quality and increase coverage. In addition, the National Electronic Health Record has been developed, which allows the unification and access to clinical information in a simple and agile way to provide better service and care.

9. Collaboration at national, regional, and international level. Coordination and cooperation between different actors, public, private, academia, and civil society, at national, regional, and international levels, allows for the sharing of knowledge, resources, and best practices, promoting R&D&I.

Regulation has to be adequate, adaptable, and flexible to facilitate and promote digital innovation, empowering people and putting them at the center.

CANADIAN INTERNET REGISTRATION AUTHORITY (CIRA)

Dr. Charles Noir
Vice-President, Community Investment, Policy & Advocacy

Question:

What role does the technical community, or technical operators, play in supporting sustainable development?

Good morning. My name is Charles Noir and I'm the Vice President, Community Investment, Policy and Advocacy at CIRA, the Canadian Internet Registration Authority, headquartered in Canada's capital, Ottawa. It's great to be here with you today.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with CIRA, we're the country code top-level domain (ccTLD) operator for Canada. This means we operate the .CA domain name registry, as well as the underlying domain name system (DNS) infrastructure that ensures internet users can access websites using easy-to-remember names instead of numerical IP addresses.

CIRA also provides cybersecurity services to over 500 organizations across Canada and DNS and registry services to organizations globally. And each year we reinvest a percentage of the generated revenue into programs and community-based projects that make the internet better for Canadians.

Long-time and active participants in global internet governance, we're a member of the internet's technical community—those actors, groups and organizations that ensure the day-to-day technical functioning of the internet. Through this work, the technical community also plays a key part in advancing sustainable development.

The stable and secure operation of the internet contributes to all 17 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—from quality education (SDG 4) to economic growth (SDG 8) to climate action (SDG 13).

And at CIRA, we see first-hand the impact of, and potential for, global DNS infrastructure in progress towards these objectives. On any given day, our anycast services, which help ensure your experience on the internet is stable and secure, resolve over 60 billion queries. Roughly 27 per cent of these queries originate from outside Europe and North America. (A query describes any time you type a domain into a browser to locate a given IP address.)

Meanwhile, our TLD anycast service serves roughly 45 operators in the global south. This includes 17 ccTLD operators. Of our 19 points of presence, 5 are primarily dedicated to this region. This infrastructure helps ensure that the global internet better meets its enormous potential to improve human wellbeing.

In the lead-up to the WSIS+20 Review, we have a pivotal opportunity to support the continued role of all stakeholders—governments, academic, civil society, the private sector and the technical community—to continue to meaningfully shape the governance of this global network. In our view, this is the best path forward to steward the promise of the internet and its fundamental role in advancing sustainable development.

Thank you**.**

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EUROPEAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS NETWORK OPERATORS' ASSOCIATION (ETNO)

Ms. Lise Fuhr
Director General

Question:

From an operator's perspective, what are the key principles we can globally agree on for a successful internet ecosystem?

The European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association (ETNO) represents the telecoms network operators in Europe. ETNO members represent about 70% of the investment into Europe's telecoms networks, the fixed and wireless connectivity which underpins our economy and society, and which drives the digital transition.

ETNO has a long history of being involved in global digital leadership and engages regularly with the Council of Europe and various institutions and organisations of the European Union and the United Nations. Furthermore, ETNO also contributes to the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), where I am currently part of the Leadership Panel. Continuing to sustain the active multistakeholder engagement in global internet governance is the first step to building a more trusted connected world. With this background, I would like to share my views on what is needed to continue developing our world's connectivity ecosystem for a positive global future.

Given the fast-evolving technology landscape, upholding the well-established global governance processes surrounding internet governance is more important than ever. The important internet governance events that are taking place and have taken place this year – including NETmundial+10, the global and regional Internet Governance Forums, the Summit of the Future, and, of course, this WSIS+20 high-level event – are platforms for all stakeholders to have their voice heard. In view of this dynamic environment, there are a number of issues related to global governance that are of great importance.

I fully support the global multi-stakeholder approach of internet governance processes. Strengthening global collaboration mechanisms is essential for internet governance, and I remain committed to the foundational shared values of these processes (openness, multi-stakeholder approach, inclusiveness, and equal footing participation). Likewise, achieving meaningful connectivity is crucial, along with the necessity of promoting affordability, equitability and universality. The focus should not only lie on coverage, but also on the actual use of connectivity and the benefits this brings.

Meaningful connectivity also implies that there is a need to prevent internet fragmentation through undue government interference, the risk of network shutdowns, or through top-down mandating standards and protocols. ETNO and our members support an open internet, and we reject attempts to fragment the internet using top-down protocols – this is bad for investment, and therefore bad for achieving universal connectivity. To me, meaningful connectivity means not just being connected to a digital network, but being connected to the global, open internet. With meaningful connectivity, all people and communities

can access the vast opportunities to be gained from connectivity and communication – the educational potential and the chance to improve lives – and this should be in the heart of multistakeholder partnerships.

Together, we should keep the focus on connecting the remaining 2,6 billion unconnected people. When addressing this challenge, it is essential to distinguish between the coverage gap and the usage gap. Mobile broadband covers 95% of the world's population that lives within the footprint of a mobile broadband network. While the coverage gap is almost 400 million people (5% of the global population), the usage gap in already covered areas represents 2,2 billion people. In other words, the most important gap to be closed in connecting the unconnected is the usage gap. It is important to distinguish and include the figures for both the coverage gap and the usage gap to address the challenges accordingly. The usage gap is not only related to affordability or lack of digital skills, but also to levels of literacy, the availability of relevant local content and services, and to lack of trust.

In contrast to other essential infrastructures, the development of telecommunications infrastructures has seen extraordinary progress in recent years. Coverage of 3G or higher mobile technologies has increased globally between 2015 and 2022 from 78% to 95%. According to GSMA data, 90% of this coverage is 4G. In contrast, electricity network deployment between 2015 and 2021 has increased from 87% to 91% and remains at 84% in rural areas. Other infrastructure, such as access to basic sanitation, has yet to reach 60% of the world's population. Furthermore, there need to be differentiated KPIs for coverage and usage to highlight and track the all the relevant issues. When setting global targets, we should bear in mind that digital infrastructures are dependent on other sectors such as electricity and that a successful connectivity ecosystem is balanced between available digital networks and demand for access services.

Finally, I would also like to highlight the Internet We Want (IWW) paper, and the principles it sets out, which the IGF Leadership Panel is currently working to develop. The principles asserted by the IWW (whole and open, universal and inclusive, free-flowing and trustworthy, safe and secure and rights-respecting) intend to provide the broader multi-stakeholder community with defined goals and targets important for the wide variety of those involved in internet governance, to come together with one common vision. I believe that these principles are suitable for their intended purpose and can guide and structure our discussions on internet governance in the future.

Leaders TalkX: ICT Applications Unlocking the Full Potential of Digital - Part II

Recording: https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/511

Moderated by High-level Track Facilitator:
Ms. Dana Ramadan, Senior Analyst, Access Partnership

Speakers:

1. **India:** Mr. Anil Kumar Lahoti, Chairman, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India
2. **Portugal:** Prof. Sandra Maximiano, Chair of the Board of Directors, Autoridade Nacional de Comunicações (ANACOM)
3. **South Africa:** Mr. Mothibi Ramusi, Chairperson, Independent Communications Authority
4. **Germany:** Ms. Noémie Bürkl, Deputy Chief Digital Officer, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
5. **eWorldwide Group:** Prof. Salma Abbasi, Chairperson and CEO
6. **EY:** Mr. Timothy Grosser, Technology Consultant for International Development for Europe Middle East, India and Africa
7. **Huawei Technologies Co, Ltd:** Ms. Nora Cao, Vice President of Global Government Affairs

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Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator

Introduction

The panel discussion on "ICT Applications Unlocking the Full Potential of Digital - Part II" brought together experts from diverse backgrounds, sectors (public and private), and geographies to explore the impact of information and communication technologies (ICTs). The panelists delved into the opportunities, challenges, and emerging trends shaping the digital landscape, offering perspectives on how ICTs can accelerate sustainable development and drive societal transformation.

Vision

The overarching vision that emerged from the panel centred on harnessing the power of digital technologies to create a more inclusive and sustainable future. The panelists emphasized the need for global and local collaborative efforts among governments, the private sector, and grassroots communities to unlock the full potential of ICTs and digital public goods, fostering innovation and driving progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

WSIS+20: 20 Years of Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities

The panel reflected on the achievements, challenges, and opportunities that have shaped the digital landscape over the past two decades, from the perspective of their respective governments and companies.

Fresh Priorities

One of the priorities emphasized during the panel was the importance of digital public goods (DPGs), such as free and open-source software. DPGs (or digital public infrastructure) can accelerate digital and societal transformation by providing accessible and cost-effective solutions to address challenges. Other priorities include robust regulatory frameworks which are needed to ensure cybersecurity and responsible data handling in traditional industries transformed by ICT.

Emerging Trends

Several emerging trends are shaping the digital landscape, including the uptake of Internet of Things (IoT) in traditional industries, the increase in e-employment, and talent upskilling. The panel highlighted the transformative impact of these trends, enabling new business models, enhancing efficiency, and driving innovation. With that said, negative trends were also highlighted, such as the rise of disinformation through AI, the digital divide between urban centers and rural areas including skill-gaps, and challenges associated with remote work.

Opportunities & Key Challenges

The panelists emphasized the need for collaborative efforts and innovative solutions to address these challenges. The panel identified numerous opportunities presented by ICTs, such as access to essential services like healthcare and education, financial inclusion, and empowerment of employees and marginalized communities. While acknowledging the immense potential of ICTs, the panelists also addressed key challenges that must be addressed. These included talent upskilling, data protection and cybersecurity, and the persistent digital divide.

• International Collaboration: The persistent digital divide and risks posed by tech misuse demand concerted efforts and international cooperation to ensure a socially just, ecological, and inclusive digital

future for all. International collaboration is crucial to harness the potential of ICT for global development. The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is a key forum for such cooperation.

• Private Sector Partnerships & Multistakeholder Engagement Framework: While limitations exist in current models, innovative models of partnership with the private sector demonstrate the collaborative solutions required to drive meaningful change at the grassroots level. A need for a paradigm shift was thus highlighted, with an emphasis on a holistic, bottom-up approach grounded in local realities and inclusive multistakeholder engagement.

• Challenges from the Industry Perspective: Talent upskilling, data protection, and cybersecurity were identified as key industry concerns.

• Digital Public Goods (DPGs) and the SDGs: DPGs were highlighted as crucial opportunities for maximizing impact towards the SDGs. Benefits of DPGs:
  o Faster time to market for technology solutions.
  o Reduced risk.
  o Increased transparency through use of standardized products.
  o Scalability and reusability.

• ICT Transforming Traditional Industries: The Internet of Things (IoT) and robust infrastructure are key opportunities to drive ICT-enabled transformations in traditional industries.

Case Examples

The panel discussion was enriched by various case examples shared by the panelists.

Harnessing ICT for Socio-Economic Growth

• India: A thriving ICT sector is a cornerstone of India's growth strategy. Initiatives like Digital India and JAM trinity (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile) promote financial inclusion, digital identity verification, and welfare delivery.
• Germany: The "FAIR Forward" initiative in Uganda exemplifies how digital tools can support green energy solutions and economic development, including empowering small business owners.

Telecommunications and the Rise of E-Employment

• Portugal: The national communications regulatory authority is taking measures to ensure reliable connectivity, promote competition in the telecom sector, and bridge the digital divide. Telecom infrastructure advancements like high-speed internet, 5G networks, and cloud computing are enabling the growth of e-employment and remote work.
Digital Public Goods
• India's national ID system (nearly 100% penetration)
• DHIS2 health information system (used in 75 countries)

Conclusion

The Leaders TalkX 10 on ICT Applications Unlocking the Full Potential of Digital Part II explored the power of digital technologies and their potential to drive sustainable development. The panel emphasized the need for collaborative efforts, innovative partnerships, and a holistic approach to address challenges and unlock the full potential of ICTs. By leveraging digital public goods, fostering talent development, and ensuring inclusivity, the panelists envisioned a future where digital technologies create a more equitable, prosperous, and sustainable world for all.

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INDIA

Mr. Anil Kumar Lahoti
Chairman
Telecom Regulatory Authority of India

Question:

Please share with us how India, with its extremely diverse demography, is harnessing ICT applications for socio-economic growth for its citizens.

Madam Moderator

Distinguished speakers in the session

All the delegates representing governments, regulators, and industry,

Ladies and Gentlemen

First of all, I thank ITU for inviting me to WSIS+20 and I consider this as my privilege to address this august gathering today on this very important topic.

In India, the government has taken multiple initiatives for harnessing the ICT sector. The Indian telecom sector is at the center stage of digital empowerment of citizens with a tele-density of 85%. There are 1.2 billion telecom subscribers and over 900 million broadband subscribers. India's average wireless data usage is over 21 GB per user per month at one of the cheapest tariffs in the world I.e. an average of 11 cents per GB. India has the highest, 87%, FinTech adoption rate, surpassing the global average rate of 64%.

India has seen the fastest roll out of 5G which started in October 2022 and in less than one and half year expanded across the country with over 438 thousand 5G BTSs, which is second largest in the world. To ensure that reliable internet connectivity reaches each and every of the 263 thousand village local governments I.e. Gram Panchayat, Govt. Of India has taken up Bharatnet project for laying fibre. Besides, mobile connectivity is also being taken to all the uncovered or poorly covered villages through Universal Service Obligation Fund.

Utilising the broadband fibre network, over 500 thousand Common Service Centres have been established all over the country to take Govt services to the doorstep of villages. In order to improve digital literacy in rural areas, Government has taken up a digital literacy program to cover 60 million rural households.

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for an inclusive financial society is an important success story of India.

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'Aadhaar' is a biometric identification system, providing a unique digital identity to Indian citizens. Utilising the Aadhar biometric identification, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana' is a financial inclusion initiative to provide access to banking services to all households. 517 Million beneficiaries have

been onboarded to banking system through this initiative. The Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) trinity has played a pivotal role in transparent direct benefit transfers of welfare subsidies to bank accounts of the underserved.

India has established a robust Unified Payment Interface I.e. UPI, which has empowered users to conveniently transfer money in real-time. Its popularity and impact on the economy can be seen from the fact that in April 2024, a total of 13 billion transactions valuing $ 235 billion took place through UPI.

Open Network for Digital Commerce I.e. ONDC is an initiative to provide low cost e-commerce through an open protocol based on open-source specifications. The network, which was launched in 2021, has more than 300 thousand merchants onboard and crossed 7.5 million transactions in February 2024 alone.

ICT is being extensively used for Ease of Doing Business by MSMEs. A single window digital system has been enabled for all the approvals and facilitating access to financing schemes for the MSME.

Extensive use of ICT is being made to increase the access to education both at the school level and in higher education.

- DIKSHA is a national platform for school education which supports 36 Indian languages. DIKSHA has more than 22 million average daily page hits.
- ePathshala facilitates access to all educational e-resources including textbooks, audio, video, periodicals, etc. which can be accessed through multiple technology platforms.
- 12 DTH Channels in school education and 32 SWAYAM PRABHA digital channels in higher education are already functional.
- A 'National Knowledge Network' has been established to connect academic and research institutions for enabling collaborative research.
- SWAYAM is the national Massive Open Online Courses platform for enabling easy access to school as well as higher education.

In health sector, Digital Public Infrastructure is being utilised to deliver universal health coverage. Co-WIN is a well known success story of India wherein this platform was effectively used for intelligent management of Covid vaccination program. Unified Health Interface UHI, Health information Exchange and Consent Manager or HIE-CM and National Health Claims Exchange are being effectively used for management of health services.

ESanjeevani is a national service providing telemedicine to citizen. The PM Jan Arogya Yojana is world's largest Health Assurance Scheme which is being completely managed digitally.

In Agriculture as well, Information technologies are finding increasing use in the value chain:

- National e-Governance Plan in Agriculture (NeGP-A) is funding projects involving use of digital technology.
- Development of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for agriculture is being taken up as an open source, open standard and inter-operable public good to enable inclusive farmer centric solutions.
- National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) is a pan-India electronic trading portal to create a unified national market for agricultural commodities.

For Disaster management – India has developed an Integrated Public Alert System-सचेत an early warning based on ITU's Common Alerting Protocol (CAP)

To conclude, digital technology is being adopted in India in almost every sector of socioeconomic growth and governance for the betterment of citizens lives. Looking ahead, we anticipate the evolution of 5G/ 6G use cases, setting the stage for further growth and innovation.

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PORTUGAL

Prof. Sandra Maximiano
Chair of the Board of Directors
Autoridade Nacional de Comunicações (ANACOM)

Question:

What is the role of telecoms in promoting e-employment and more specifically remote work and what are the new challenges for the regulatory authority?

E-employment, also known as online employment, has become increasingly prevalent due to advancements in digital technology and connectivity through the widespread availability of the internet and, more recently, due to applications of artificial intelligence. It involves using digital tools and online platforms for conducting any employment related activities and processes, from job searching and recruitment to onboarding and remote work, and offers several advantages for both employers and employees.

First, online recruitment platforms and digital tools streamline the hiring process, making it faster and more efficient. Second, e-employment creates a job market with no geographical boundaries, which allows for a wider reach and access to a larger pool of job openings (for candidates) and talent (for organizations). Third, it allows for digital onboarding and training. It also promotes continuous learning and skill development, as it requires employees to constantly adapt to new technologies. Fourth, with e-employment, remote work arrangements have become more feasible and common. Employees can work from anywhere with an internet connection, providing flexibility and work-life balance. Remote work reduces commuting and travel, which not only saves time and money but also reduces stress and environmental impact.

While e-employment offers many advantages, it also comes with challenges. For instance, remote employees may face obstacles in effective communication and collaboration with their colleagues or supervisors and employers may face difficulties in monitoring and assessing the productivity of remote employees. It blurs the boundaries between work and personal life; employees may find it challenging to establish a healthy work-life balance. Also, some individuals may struggle with self-discipline and find it challenging to maintain productivity without direct supervision. It can also lead to feelings of isolation and reduced employee engagement.

Over the past decade, we have witnessed a tremendous growth in e-employment and remote work, largely driven by advancements in the telecom industry. High quality connectivity, virtual private networks, cloud computing, access to vast amounts of data, and unified communication platforms integrating messaging, voice, and video have been the key drivers of a digital revolution that has significantly transformed labour markets and labour relationships.

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As e-employment becomes more common and prevalent, the demand for robust, reliable bandwidth and low latency increases. Telecom providers must scale up their investments in both physical infrastructure and software, such as improved broadband speeds, 5G rollouts, and data centers. Moreover, in a world of remote global work and collaboration, it is essential to bridge the digital divide between urban centers and rural areas. E-employment also raises concerns related to data security and privacy of employees, as it involves sharing sensitive information and data over digital platforms and multiple and personal devices. Telcos need to invest in cybersecurity and technology that keeps data secure.

Telcos have the potential to not only provide quality connectivity but also drive innovation and shape the future of e-employment. By working closely with software developers, telcos can contribute to the creation of advanced communication tools that align with the evolving needs of remote workers and digital nomads.

The key contribution to employment and digital ecosystems by telcos is undoubtedly the provisioning of quality connectivity. As such, Anacom, the Portuguese regulatory authority, has taken regulatory actions to promote reliable and quality connectivity across the entire country. It is worth noting the regulations intended to promote investment in the construction of high-capacity networks by operators. Specifically, this regulation allows operators to benefit from access to physical infrastructure owned by "the incumbent firm," Altice, at regulated prices and conditions. In cases where building their own network is more challenging, access to the Altice Group's fiber optic network has been regulated to encourage competition in the provision of services to end users. In addition, I highlight the role of ANACOM in promoting connectivity and competition while providing governmental assistance regarding: the use of infrastructure for hosting electronic communications networks; the study and analysis of the technical and financial configuration of the new CAM ring (connection by submarine cable between Mainland Portugal, the Azores and Madeira), and also in equipping the cable ring with environmental seismic detection, the technical support for the launch of the so-called "white areas" tender.

E-employment and flexible remote work contributed to the growth of digital nomads, freelance work and the gig economy. In recent years, Portugal has become an increasingly popular destination for digital nomads. In order to attract more and retain digital nomads, the country needs ubiquitous coverage of high speed networks and a competitive landscape that favours emergence of both fixed and mobile internet offerings that respond to the specific needs off these users. They tend to prefer standalone offers with low latency and fast speeds, and we believe that a market structure that favours sustainable competition that can foster investment is key in ensuring telecom providers have both the capacity and the incentive to offer this level of service and competitive prices.

Lastly, it is important to emphasize ANACOM´s work in promoting digital literacy and empowering end users, which is crucial to guarantee that all workers have an equal access to the benefits of e-employment to every potential worker. Additionally, ANACOM, in collaboration with the Directorate General for the Consumer and the European center for Consumer, launched on the World Telecommunication & Information Society Day, May 17, 2024 the website www.com4expats.pt (Communication For Expats), in order to provide essential information for expats, many of whom work remotely.

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SOUTH AFRICA

Mr. Mothibi Ramusi
Chairperson
Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA)

Question:

How have ICT applications transformed traditional industries?

[MISSING STATEMENT]

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GERMANY

Ms. Noémie Bürkl
Deputy Chief Digital Officer
German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

Question:

What are the key challenges and opportunities Germany sees in international cooperation to harness ICT for socio-economic development?

The global digital age opens up tremendous opportunities – and harbours challenges for all of us.

The use of digital tools can accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. They can enhance access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and financial inclusion.

Digital tools can contribute to a greener future, they can empower youth, women, girls, and marginalised communities and they can drive socio-economic development in a sustainable manner.

Take for example Nancy Amito, who runs a small restaurant in Northern Uganda. 90% of people in her region do not have access to regular electricity. Our initiative FAIR Forward, together with the African tech-company Sunbird AI developed a tool that recommends locations for green energy sources.

Based on these recommendations, a set of small solar plants was installed in Nancy's village.

Through the reliable availability of electricity and light, she was able to extend her opening hours and, in consequence, double her income.

But we are aware that digital transformation is yet to benefit everyone.

One of the most pressing issues of our time is the persistent digital divide. Millions of people are still lacking meaningful connectivity.

This threatens to exacerbate existing inequalities on a global scale.

Bridging this gap demands concerted efforts that particularly consider marginalised communities.

Also, the misuse of technologies can threaten societal cohesion and democracies. Think for instance of the risks posed by disinformation, exacerbated by the rise of Artificial Intelligence.

This in consequence, requires that we work together for, as we hope, a socially just digital future that is also ecological and includes every one..

In times, in which digital technologies have such an influence in our lives, the German government has recently taken an important step into the right direction: With the publication of our first Strategy for

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International Digital Policy, Germany recognizes the need to use digitalization in order to tackle global challenges even more proactively.

As German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, we are committed to harnessing the opportunities presented by digital technologies for sustainable development, in close cooperation with our partner countries.

To leverage the opportunities and mitigate the challenges that come with digital transformation, we believe international cooperation is essential.

That is why forums, such as the World Summit on the Information Society are so crucial for all of us.

Let's work together towards a socially just, ecological and feminist digital future for all.

Many thanks for having me here on stage!

eWORLDWIDE GROUP

Prof. Salma Abbasi
Chairperson and CEO

Question:

What limitations do you see with the current private sector partnership models, and what innovations do you recommend to enable more localized private sector partnerships with stakeholders to drive inclusive, sustainable social and economic growth?

We are living in times of multiple global crisis, and a visible deficit of trust, equity, and humanity. As a result, many nations face complex multi-dimensional challenges.

The cost of living crisis and the widening multiple 'divides' are fueling extreme poverty, homelessness, unemployment, shortage of food supplies, and escalation of gender-based violence, youth violence, gangs, drugs, and knife crime, coupled with the polarisation of societies, egged on by unethical social media and artificial intelligence.

Nations and cities are also crippled by lack of resources, conflicting priorities, unreliable and outdated infrastructures, skill-gaps, and a lack of willingness to embrace change or take risks at all levels.

This may sound familiar to many of you however I am referring to the situation in the UK today and many other cities in Europe and the US.

We can no longer rely only on the big 5 to show us the way by creating national transformation policies, strategies, or 10-year masterplans, as they often don't accurately reflect the local 'invisible and visible' barriers and power structures preventing meaningful change.

Solving these enormous global challenges requires a paradigm shift to decouple from the normal way of working, allowing us to fast track and co-create innovative, but realistic scalable solutions, with impactful and sustainable deployment models.

This requires a holistic recoupling from bottom-up, top-down, embedded in the local ground realities, and physical, economic, social, environmental, geo-political and cultural context. This calls for a robust multi-sector stakeholder engagement framework which will act as the foundation and governance model to drive and ensure inclusive meaningful change at the grass roots, to 'leaving no one behind'.

However, demoralised, underpaid, undermotivated, disempowered people cannot lead the 'charge for change', nor can they successfully form new partnerships or collaborations which are a must if we are to resolve complex challenges.

Solutions need to address multiple problems, and gaps in an integrated manner, creatively leveraging the strengths, experience, insights and knowledge and operating practices from private sector, while listening to the voices at the grass roots who are struggling for basic survivability.

For this to succeed we also need to form new types of private sector partnerships, to truly leverage their hidden operating strengths, models, streamlined processes, flattened organization structures, rapid decision-making, proven information systems and monitoring efficiencies to eliminate waste.

Our organization has successfully designed and deployed such models in different locations in Africa and Asia for the past 2 decades. Innovatively forming unexpected partnerships with multi-sector private organizations from pharmaceutical, agriculture, transportation, petroleum, telecommunication, and retail stores who joined hands with local government agencies in rural communities to deliver vital integrated healthcare, education, and support services that drove sustainable social and inclusive economic growth which transformed communities at the grass roots.

Therefore, it is crucial for us to continuously engage with different sets of stakeholders from multiple sectors, backgrounds and communities, grounded in continuous inter-generational dialogue. This will ensure we understand the dynamic lived experiences to jointly adopt and adapt, to oversee positive changes essential for a resilient and sustainable future for humanity and our planet.

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EY

Mr. Timothy Grosser
Technology Consultant for International Development for Europe Middle East, India and Africa

Question:

How do we leverage technology better to maximize our impact toward the SDGs?

[MISSING STATEMENT]

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HUAWEI

Ms. Nora Cao
Vice President of Global Government Affairs
Huawei Technologies Co.,Ltd.

Question:

In the process of "ICT Applications Unlocking the Full Potential of Digital", could you please talk about the difficulties and challenges you have encountered from the industry perspective?

In the process of unleashing digital potential through ICT applications, four major challenges are faced:

- The first one challenge is the ICT application and the convergence, because now we know 5G, cloud, and AI. Many customers, they ask how eventually we can make good use of these technologies. The second challenge is definitely about the data protection and the cybersecurity, because we know there is huge amounts of data generated in the network, and then many people has concerns about the organization data, about their personal data. The third one is about the talent cultivation and skill upgrade, including how to make good training and whether we can provide good content, and also how to attract talent and keep them in the industry. The fourth challenge is about innovation. We mentioned about technology innovation, but what's also important is the business model innovation.

We believe that two fundamental elements are important when addressing these challenges. First, we think important is "People", and the second one is "Awareness".

- **We at least need to unite three group of people and unleash the potential.** The first one is R&D, they are the hardcore of the development of good products. The second group is the students. Recently, HUAWEI hosted the biggest global ICT competition awards. there are more than **80** countries , **2,000** schools, **170,000** students signed up to participate in this competition. And on 26th, totally in the end, **9** country students and also **19** team, they won the AI award, **one** team won the social media award, and **two** teams won the green development award, and the **four** team won the tech for women award. So for this part, we think student is important. The third group is the experts who has experience because in the training programs. we need more efforts and working together with the partners to jointly contribute to the training and to help the students and also working together with R&D and talents.

- **And the other fundamental elements—Awareness.** First of all, the strategy is important. And from top down, attention really helps the organization and also our customer to make sure that they can focus on the technology and the development with the combination and then they can develop good solutions. The second awareness is about cooperation, collaboration, and sometimes also maybe competition is also important. The third is talent coordination. In February this year, HUAWEI had the talent summit. We created new programs every year with UNESCO, ITU, JAL, UIL. On this, from this perspective, we think it really matters to solve these problems and the challenges.

There are challenges everywhere, but we believe that challenges are the soil from which opportunities grow. So we will continue on this path and contribute as much as we can as a company.

Leaders TalkX: Looking Ahead: Emerging tech for building sustainable futures

Recording: https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/515

Moderated by High-level Track Facilitator:
Dr. Liberato Bautista, President, Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO)

UN Representative:
Mr. Dino Cataldo Dell'Accio, Chief Information Officer, United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF)

Speakers:

1. **India:** Mr. Niraj Verma, Additional Secretary Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Ministry of Communications
2. **Wallonia-Brussels:** Dr. Sharon Weinblum, Delegate General Wallonia-Brussels, Permanent mission of Belgium to the UN in Geneva
3. **Netherlands:** Mr. Ernst Noorman, Ambassador at Large for Cyber Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
4. **Shionogi / Global Coalition on Aging:** Dr. Pol Vandenbroucke, Vice President of Global Government Affairs
5. **The UN BRIEF:** Ms. Maya Plentz, Executive Director

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Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator

This Leaders TalkX theme was "Looking Ahead: Emerging Tech for Building Sustainable Futures. The session reaffirmed the WSIS Principles and Lines of Action as main reference points for global digital discussions, especially in developing and using emerging technology to build sustainable futures. The panel was reminded of 2024 and 2025 being pivotal for the governance of the internet, artificial intelligence, and other emerging technologies. These were evident across the interventions by all six high-level speakers from governments (3), from the United Nations (1), and from civil society (2), who touched upon the session theme's multiple aspects.

The moderator impressed the panelists and the audience with the fact that the title of the high-level session indicated not just a singular future but of futures—in the plural. He then underscored that none of us have a franchise of the future—not in our imagining and not in our acting. But imagining and acting together on our "futures," not the least through multistakeholder processes like WSIS, is most desirable to understand better what the future holds about technology, digital futures, and more.

The intersections of ongoing intergovernmental processes were spotlighted, particularly the negotiation of the texts for the Global Digital Compact, the Pact for the Future, and the Summit of the Future, just ahead of 2025's WSIS+20 review. It was pointed out that these processes leading to digital governance are "increasingly complex and politically charged." Even as various stakeholders are grappling with the fast-moving emergence of ICTs, lagging is the governance architecture that is crucial in technologies that equally have the potential to undermine the cultural diversity, social fabric, and cohesion of society. (Wallonie-Bruxelles, The UN Brief), Netherlands)

The universality of human rights and their protection and safeguarding—online and offline—were underscored as crucial principles for all digital technologies and internet governance. Aside from human rights, other ethical dimensions of ICTs were addressed variedly by the panelists. The warning was sounded out that "the ethos of breaking things and moving fast has to be put to rest, as we have seen how it breaks our societies, from the divisiveness of our online public square to the pollution of our ecosystems with online toxic exchanges and dissemination of mis- and disinformation, that spill to the real world."(Netherlands, Belgium, The UN Brief)

The panelist presentations underscored the transformative power of information and communication technologies, which have profoundly changed and impacted how various sectors of society work and deliver their goals. This includes the governance aspects of already available technologies and emerging ones and their use and application in fields like education, aging, healthcare delivery, health research, gathering news and distributing information, and culture and the arts. Innovations and strategies in artificial intelligence are plentiful, and national and global governance mechanisms must be implemented now rather than later. Even as AI is being developed, incentivized by its potential to transform (improve) economies, and portrayed as a social good, it is desired that these strategies square with principles already enunciated by WSIS, particularly the Tunis principles. The panel was made aware that cultural diversity must be factored into the roles assigned to technology, especially AI and other emerging technologies. An example was given: AI development and use present numerous opportunities for the cultural sector, starting with generative AI tools for artistic creation. Still, significant discoverability issues (the ability of online content to be discovered) of cultural content exist, which influence multilingualism and cultural diversity. (GCOA, India, Netherlands, Wallonie-Bruxelles)

The panelists collectively emphasized a robust public-private partnership, a cornerstone of collective efforts needed in both governance (policy) and implementation. Such partnerships, however, must enhance and uphold the multistakeholder partnerships that ITU has modeled in conducting the business of the WSIS Process. This resonated with the Tunis principles of "effective cooperation among governments, the private

sector, civil society, the UN, and other international organizations, each according to their different roles and responsibilities, and leveraging their expertise. (UNJSPF, Netherlands, The UN Brief)

This multistakeholder partnership that WSIS already models is also enhanced by broader geographic collaboration (i.e., interregional), ensuring that strategies to address complex issues related to emerging technologies benefit from a variety of perspectives, ensuring inclusivity which is essential in the development of robust and adaptable policies that can withstand the test of time and technological innovation. But this "variety of perspectives" is under attack by emerging technologies (Generative AI) that undermine public interest in news media organizations and when multilingualism is not promoted in social media applications, including those using AI. The audience was made aware that "the referencing methods on search engines and platforms may already tend to reinforce the visibility of linguistically majority content, therefore in English." (Netherlands, GCOA, The UN Brief, Wallonia-Bruxelles).

This panel highlighted the urgent need to incentivize innovation in ICTs, underlining their crucial role in shaping sustainable futures. The digital frontier, largely uncharted and expansive open for exploration, if not also abuse and mis- and disinformation, is a minefield for innovation and the emergence of ICTs. (India, GCOA, The UN Brief)

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INDIA

Mr. Niraj Verma
Additional Secretary
Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Ministry of Communications

Question:

What are the key reforms undertaken by India in telecom sector?

India has always been a cradle of significant innovations, from the invention of zero to pioneering the digital frontier. As the world's fastest-growing major economy, our commitment to sustainable development is steadfast and is reflected not just in policies, but in tangible, impactful actions.

India is making a strong push in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI):

- With a vision to 'Make AI in India and Make AI work for India', Government of India, has been emphasizing on the significance of utilizing Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning to enhance each & every sector of the economy.
- This vision lays the framework for building a vibrant AI ecosystem in India, enabling #AIforAll. It is in line with the development philosophy of the government, using technology to ensure social and inclusive growth for all. It also proposes the feasibility of Indian AI led solutions for other similarly placed developing countries.
- With multiple initiatives government has taken significant steps towards ensuring the Global Competitiveness of India's domestic Deep-Tech Startups and Industry. Keeping the idea of AI for All at its core, India is democratizing the AI innovation ecosystem, progressing towards becoming a global producer of AI.

India's Mission for AI

- India, being the fastest growing economy with the second largest population in the world, has a significant stake in the AI revolution. Recognizing AI's potential to transform economies, India was amongst the first set of economies to define its National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence in 2018.
- Government of India has recently approved the IndiaAI Mission with outlay of more than INR 10,000 Crore aims to bolster India's global leadership in AI, foster technological self-reliance, ensure ethical and responsible AI deployment, and democratize the benefits of AI across all strata of society. The IndiaAI Mission including pivotal initiatives like the IndiaAI Compute Capacity, IndiaAI Innovation Centre (IAIC), IndiaAI Datasets Platform, IndiaAI Application Development Initiative, IndiaAI FutureSkill, IndiaAI Startup Financing, and Safe & Trusted AI.

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- IndiaAI Compute Capacity: India's rapidly expanding AI start-up and research ecosystem needs robust compute capacity. In view of this, public and private sectors will collaborate to create compute capacity of more than 10000 Graphic Processing Units (GPUs). Further, an AI marketplace will be designed to offer AI as a service and pre-trained models to AI innovators.
- IndiaAI Innovation Centre: The IndiaAI Innovation Centre will undertake the development and deployment of indigenous Large Multimodal Models (LMMs) and domain-specific foundational models in critical sectors.
- IndiaAI Datasets Platform: Under this pillar, a unified data platform will be developed to provide a one-stop solution for seamless access to quality non-personal datasets to Indian Startups and Researchers for AI innovation.
- IndiaAI Application Development Initiative: AI has the potential to devise population-scale solutions to address critical challenges faced by our society. The initiative will focus on developing /scaling/ promoting the adoption of impactful AI solutions with potential for catalyzing large-scale socio-economic transformation.
- IndiaAI FutureSkill: IndiaAI FutureSkills is conceptualized to mitigate barriers to entry into AI programs in the BTech, MTech and Ph.D. levels. Further, multiple Data and AI Labs will be set-up in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities across India to impart foundational level courses.
- IndiaAI Startup Financing: The AI Startup financing component will support and accelerate numerous deep-tech AI startups and provide them with streamlined access to funding.
- Safe & Trusted AI: The Safe & Trusted AI component will enable the implementation of 'Responsible AI' projects including the development of indigenous tools and frameworks.

AI in Financial Services

AI-Driven Fintech Innovations: Support for fintech startups using AI for fraud detection, credit scoring, and personalized financial services.

Digital Payments and Banking: Implementation of AI in digital payments infrastructure (e.g., Unified Payments Interface - UPI) to enhance security and user experience.

National AI Portal

INDIAai: The National AI Portal of India serves as a one-stop platform for AI-related news, learning resources, and collaboration opportunities, fostering a vibrant AI ecosystem.

India AI Mission: The india AI Mission, is poised to catalyse various components of the IndiaAI Mission, including pivotal initiatives like the IndiaAI Compute Capacity, IndiaAI Innovation Centre (IAIC), IndiaAI Datasets Platform, IndiaAI Application Development Initiative, IndiaAI FutureSkills, IndiaAI Startup Financing, and Safe & Trusted AI.

AI for Social Good

AI for Accessibility: Projects aimed at developing AI tools to assist persons with disabilities, improving accessibility and inclusivity in education, employment, and public services.

AI for Environmental Sustainability: Initiatives using AI to monitor and manage environmental resources, track climate change impacts, and support sustainable practices.

Research and Development

AI Research Labs: Establishment of specialized AI research labs in premier institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISERs).

100 5G Labs: In 100 academic institutions, India has established 5G labs for experimentation purposes to foster innovation and promote research.

Innovation and Startups

Support for startups and innovators through initiatives like Startup India and Atal Innovation Mission.

Creation of innovation hubs and incubators to foster entrepreneurial talent in AI and emerging technologies.

Capacity Building and Skills Development

Programs to upskill and reskill the workforce in AI and related technologies.

Focus on STEM education and partnerships with academic institutions to nurture the next generation of AI talent.

Digital Transformation

Our ambitious Digital India initiative has been a cornerstone of our strategy. This initiative aims not only to transform everyday lives through technology but also to propel them towards sustainable practices. We are investing in digital infrastructure to connect urban and rural, rich and poor, young and old, thus democratizing access to information and opportunity.

Since its inception, over 600 million people have gained internet access, catalyzing a digital transformation that spans from remote villages to bustling cities. This initiative is not only about connectivity but also about using technology as a lever for social and economic change.

Renewable Energy

Renewable energy is another domain where India is making significant strides. We are proud to be a part of the International Solar Alliance, which underlines our commitment to reducing dependency on fossil fuels. India's renewable energy sector has witnessed exponential growth. As of 2023, India's renewable energy capacity stands at over 150 gigawatts, which accounts for more than 38% of our total installed power capacity. We are on track to achieve our ambitious target of 450 GW of renewable energy by 2030, demonstrating our commitment to the Paris Agreement and our own National Action Plan on Climate Change.

Furthermore, India is tapping into the Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Big Data to advance our environmental goals.

Smart Cities and IoT

India is at the forefront of the smart cities initiative, with 100 smart cities being developed across the country, integrating IoT, AI, and big data to optimize resource use and enhance urban infrastructure. These cities aim to improve energy efficiency by 40% and reduce waste generation through intelligent waste management systems.

Agriculture and AI

Our farmers are leveraging artificial intelligence to predict weather patterns, enhance crop yields, and minimize resource usage. This fusion of traditional knowledge with cutting-edge technology has enabled us to reduce the agricultural water footprint by 20% over the past five years while increasing food production.

In confronting global challenges such as climate change, it is imperative that we look towards emerging technologies not merely as tools of economic progress but as enablers of robust and inclusive sustainable development. India envisions a future where technology serves not just a few but every citizen, enhancing quality of life, preserving our environment, and contributing to global peace and stability.

India believes in a future where technology serves humanity, enhances our environment, and promotes global peace and security.

As we innovate, we are eager to share our experiences and learn from this esteemed global community. We believe that international cooperation and knowledge exchange are vital to overcoming contemporary challenges. Together, we can harness the full potential of emerging technologies to forge a sustainable, resilient, and prosperous future for all.

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WALLONIA-BRUSSELS

Dr. Sharon Weinblum
Delegate General Wallonia-Brussels
Permanent mission of Belgium to the UN in Geneva

Question:

Dr. Sharon Weinblum, you represent French-speaking governments of Belgium here in Geneva, and cultural diversity is of utmost importance for you. How do you see emerging technologies impacting cultural diversity? And in the case of AI, do you see it as an opportunity or a threat for cultural diversity?

Nous pensons que nous devrions nous pencher sur la question de la diversité culturelle lorsque nous évoquons l'enjeu des technologies émergentes pour un avenir durable (objet de cette discussion).

Le perfectionnement et l'utilisation de l'IA présente des opportunités nombreuses pour le secteur culturel à commencer par l'utilisation des outils de l'ia générative pour la création artistique

Toutefois, des enjeux importants de découvrabilité (capacité d'un contenu en ligne à être découvert) des contenus culturels existent qui ont une influence sur le multilinguisme et la diversité culturelle.

Le constat actuel:

- Sur les 10 millions de sites les plus visités, seulement 3% offrent du contenu en français, comparé à 60% en anglais; on ne peut qu'imaginer la portion congrue qui revient alors aux langues encore moins répandues ;

- les modalités de référencement sur les moteurs de recherche et plateformes peuvent déjà avoir tendance à renforcer la visibilisation de contenus linguistiquement majoritaires, donc en anglais.

Le recours annoncé ou effectif aux grands modèles de langage (LLM) par les moteurs de recherche et par les plateformes de contenus culturels en ligne, va créer une rupture dont on ne cerne pas encore les conséquences mais dont les risques pour la diversité culturelle sont déjà identifiables en partie :

- l'entraînement des LLM sur un corpus limité, en raison de la barrière de la langue, d'une présence moindre en ligne, ou du « verrouillage» pour des raisons de droit d'auteur, renforce les biais, d'une part et la mise en avant de contenus culturels présents en plus grand nombre/plus demandés en ligne, d'autre part. Les accords entre plusieurs grands médias et les entreprises concevant des LLM, certes positive, minorisera d'autant plus certains contenus moins reconnus et qui refusent que leur contenu soit utilisé librement.

- le renforcement chez l'utilisateur de la tendance à ne pas consulter la source originale. Cela implique un risque réel de passer à côté de sources et contenus importants pour les cultures locales. Ex : si l'on demande aujourd'hui à un LLM des informations sur la nouvelle vague de BD belge, il nous donne un aperçu très général de ce en quoi cela consiste, ne semblant pas saisir le concept, et génère des informations erronées en renvoyant par exemple à un auteur d'un autre pays.

- La manque de visibilité donnée à une grande partie des contenus culturels va avoir impact en chaîne: sur leur consommation par les citoyens, sur la rémunération des acteurs culturels et sur leur capacité à continuer à produire des contenus et dès lors à maintenir une diversité culturelle.

Dès lors, il est essentiel de :

- soutenir les contenus culturels locaux comme le fait la Belgique francophone;

- d'imposer non seulement aux plateformes de contenus culturels de proposer un quota de création locale (cf directive européenne SMSA) mais aussi de garantir leur mise en avant à l'utilisateur ;

- de créer des plateformes consacrées aux contenus culturels dans d'autres langues que l'anglais. Cf TV5 monde.

- d'entraîner l'IA sur des corpus dans des langues moins présentes en ligne (ce que l'amélioration la traduction automatique pourrait favoriser).

- de prendre en compte cet enjeu en compte, y compris les biais, dès la conception même des modèles et des algorithmes.

- d'imposer une transparence quant aux sources utilisées (cf AI Act de l'UE).

NETHERLANDS

Mr. Ernst Noorman
Ambassador at Large for Cyber Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Question:

As Chair of the Freedom Online Coalition in 2024, how does the Netherlands work with this Coalition to ensure that its work remains future-proof in terms of emerging technologies and their governance?

Excellencies, dear colleagues and distinguished guests, thank you all for your insightful remarks.

As we have heard many times over the past two days, 2024 and 2025 are pivotal years for the governance of the internet, AI, and other emerging technologies. With the Global Digital Compact and the Summit for the Future taking place this year, and the broader WSIS+20 review next year, the international community will decide on the modalities for addressing these increasingly complex and politically charged issues of digital governance.

Under the Dutch Chairship, the Freedom Online Coalition has prioritized this topic in this year's plan of action, recognizing the coalition's significant contributions to these debates.

Although the name of our Coalition is the Freedom Online Coalition, and we never cease the underline that human rights are universal and apply equally online and offline, I do want to stress that this principle is crucial for all digital technologies, not only internet governance. As digital technologies continue to evolve and permeate every aspect of our lives, it is imperative that these rights remain safeguarded. Upholding this approach is fundamental to fostering a free, open, secure, and inclusive digital environment.

[The Multistakeholder Approach]

The importance of the multistakeholder approach has always been a cornerstone of FOC collaboration. We firmly believe in the principles set out in Tunis, emphasizing "effective cooperation among governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations, and other international organizations, each according to their different roles and responsibilities, and leveraging their expertise." This approach has been instrumental in making the internet the success it is today.

The FOC has internalized this principle, organizing ourselves to be more than just a coalition of states. We have built a strong and knowledgeable community around us, consisting of technical experts, civil society, and industry members. Our Advisory Network provides both solicited and unsolicited advice, bringing in the technical expertise that policymakers sometimes lack.

A prime example of this is the FOC's statement on Artificial Intelligence. Although it was written in 2022—ancient history in the AI world—it remains a robust document that provides guidance on the human rights risks associated with this technology. Its enduring relevance is due to the expert input we received and our application-neutral approach to the text.

[The Interregional Membership]

Another remarkable aspect of the FOC is its interregional membership. Our coalition unites states from all continents, representing a diverse array of cultures, perspectives, and experiences. This global representation not only reflects our shared commitment to digital rights but also serves to strengthen our collective efforts.

By engaging in regional dialogues with states and stakeholders worldwide, the FOC fosters a rich exchange of ideas and best practices. These dialogues enable us to build a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of human rights online issues.

As we navigate the complexities of emerging technologies and their governance, our interregional collaboration ensures that our strategies are well-rounded and informed by a variety of perspectives. This inclusivity is essential for developing robust, adaptable policies that can withstand the test of time and technological evolution.

By bringing together diverse voices from different stakeholders and regions, the FOC can identify and address the most pressing issues, promoting a proactive rather than reactive stance on defending human rights online. This forward-thinking approach helps ensure that our work remains future-proof, safeguarding human rights as new technologies emerge and evolve.

Thank you.

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Shionogi / Global Coalition on Aging (GCOA)

Dr. Pol Vandenbroucke
Vice President of Global Government Affairs

Question:

Are we using technology sufficiently to address health issues and what are examples of where it can be applied more?

I would like to thank the conference organizers for inviting me and I am looking forward to a great discussion with so many experts in the field. I represent both Shionogi, a mid-sized Japanese pharmaceutical company, and the Global Coalition on Aging at this event.

The private sector's role in building sustainable futures is crucial and I look forward during this panel to help continue a powerful public-private-partnership. Considering the mega-trend of aging, this topic becomes even more important to help enable a healthier aging and healthier longevity as we experience longer lives and a profound demographic change with an increasing proportion of older adults in most countries around the world. Ongoing innovation and therefore policies that support and incentivize innovation in technology and biomedicine are more important than ever.

The growing rate of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) ought to be at the very top of our agenda because it is a crisis that is responsible for over 1.2 million deaths today, increasing to 10 million deaths by mid-century. The cornerstone of our current medical-health infrastructure is at risk.

There is no doubt information technology has profoundly changed healthcare, but more can be done. I would like to highlight a few areas where impact has been made and where technology can improve healthcare for more people around the world.

Education: With an increasingly aging population we have moved from acute disease to chronic disease. Education is therefore ever more important, for current patients and for potential future patients: many chronic diseases like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, COPD, arthritis, even Alzheimer's are in large part preventable, or manageable through early detection and treatment, but one must be aware and informed to act. Information on health and disease has become more readily accessible in the last few decades but important issues remain:

Curation: to distinguish between correct and useful information and information that is misleading, or wrong. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a textbook example of how disinformation can have a detrimental impact on prevention and treatment of a potentially life-threatening disease.

General health literacy: a basic level of health literacy is needed to provide context to interpret the complex disease information available, especially where basic science education is lacking or deficient.

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Healthcare Delivery: Faster & More Accurate Access to Patient Records through electronic health records (EHR) which make patient health information instantly accessible to providers and patients:

Patients can instantly review their EHR on the patient portal, e.g. for their test results.

Care teams can coordinate decision-making using the same up-to-date information.

Administrative staff spend less time on paperwork and phone calls.

But: Portability is still a challenge for EHR.

Improved Access to Care: Cost, distance, and physical limitations can prevent patients from receiving the care that they need.

Telehealth has proven to reduce emergency room visits and lower costs for patients and providers. It can be used for GP consultation for referral to a specialist, monitoring of disease, etc.

But disadvantaged populations are still affected: access to information technology infrastructure can be limited, especially in LMICs.

IT Literacy is an issue: Older adults may not be as conversant with technology as the people who design the systems expect. Providers can offer solutions that help also them reap the benefits of technology in healthcare, as in other areas of life.

Better Diagnostics: Technology has improved diagnostics' accuracy, speed, and accessibility. Diagnostic technology plays a key role in addressing chronic illness and in identifying antimicrobial resistance early on in the treatment of an infection.

Health Research: Technology has revolutionised the way research is done in many ways. Computer-aided drug design, where computational methods are used to design new drugs.

Direct Data Capture: where data collection in clinical studies happens without the need for transcription and source data verification, reducing errors and saving valuable time.

Real World Evidence: understanding how medicines and other healthcare solutions perform in the real world where people have often multiple health conditions and take different medications has been made possible through EHR. This is especially important in older adults.

And above all, we have only scratched the surface of how AI can be applied in many parts of the drug discovery and development, and management processes like Clinical trial design, QC, drug discovery, development, and safety monitoring.

THE UN BRIEF

Ms. Maya Plentz
Executive Director

Question:

How is emerging tech impacting the news business and should the UN and its agencies step up efforts to protect this pillar of democracy, the independent news business?

Public interest news media organizations are struggling to survive.

According to Maria Reesa, Nobel Laureate and co-founder and CEO of Rappler, a news media organization in the Philippines," only 0,3% of development funds go to public interest news media organizations and independent news groups in the Global South".

Public interest news media organizations are closing at an alarming rate, and not only under authoritarian regimes in the Global South, but in the so-called developed world where public interest news media have been gutted of advertising revenue by social media platforms.

Now we see that Generative AI is on the path to cause similar harms to the industry. The slow uptake of policies guiding the development of these technologies – or rather the development of business models of Gen AI LLMs that assumed that scrapping the open web according that US copyright laws of Fair Use would apply to pay-walled articles, or copyrighted news stories in open news sites – has met with a global backlash of publishers and authors that have not agreed with their interpretation of the law.

While some were quick to make licensing agreements with AP, Le Monde, reputable news organizations, there are many other small publishers and not so small that are just being told that there will be no agreement, such as the New York Times, where negotiations for a licensing agreement to use their content fell apart and now, they are suing. The culprit? Using their content for training the LLMs without approval and now not willing to pay an adequate amount so the publication can continue to produce high-quality, researched and fact-checked news. Like all news organisations that have ethical standards and a duty to inform the public, that support values compatible with open democratic societies.

That the founders of these companies not for a moment considered how they are harvesting the data without adequately compensating authors, journalists, and publishers is somewhat jarring, yet not surprising. The ethos of breaking things and moving fast has to be put to rest, as we have seen how it breaks our societies, from the divisiveness of our online public square to the pollution of our information ecosystems with online toxic exchanges and dissemination of mis-and disinformation, that spill over to the

real world. From the violent attacks to the American and in Brazilian government institutions, all coordinated via social media and amplified by malicious actors.

There are thousands of similar examples in other countries, of political upheaval caused by usage of these platforms, amplified by AI in the last decade.

The UN agencies are fighting a constant battle, I am told. For every piece of information that is factual, gathered by humanitarian workers, relayed by video links in real time, there is a whole industry that is working to undermine these efforts in Gaza, Ukraine, and elsewhere in conflict ridden zones in Sub-Saharan Africa.

This is not a trivial problem, and we need, as Information Society members, to uphold the policies and financing means to strengthen news media ecosystems everywhere.

What will happen to small publishers and independent journalists working on their own on new models of news distribution such as Substack and other newsletter platforms? Will Gen AI platforms just harvest their data without paying for their real value?

I hope we will find answers in these few days of talks and exchanges.

Thank you.

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Leaders TalkX: Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society

Recording: https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/498

Moderated by High-level Track Facilitator:
Ms. Jennifer Chung, Director of Corporate Knowledge, DotAsia Organisation

UN Representative:
Mr. Sameer Chauhan, Director, United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC)

Speakers:

1. **Costa Rica:** H.E. Mr. Hubert Vargas Picado, Vice Minister of Telecommunications, Ministry of Science, Technology and Telecommunications
2. **Russian Federation:** H.E. Mr. Grigoriy Borisenko Deputy, Minister, Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation
3. **Korea (Rep. of):** Dr. Kyoung Yul Bae, President, Korea Information Society Development Institute (KISDI)
4. **Bureau of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD):** Internet Governance Office, Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia Vice-Chair, Bureau of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) at UNCTAD
5. **Syrian Arab Republic:** H.E. Eng. Iyad Al Khatib, Minister, Ministry of Communications and Technology

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Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator

This session looked at universally held values and ethical dimensions into the digital and focused on collective responsibility of all stakeholders to foster an Information Society that champions the common good, safeguards privacy, and actively combats abusive and discriminatory behaviors enabled by digital technologies.

The panelists highlighted the importance of awareness and education in the use of digital technologies and discussed the implementation of laws and preventive measures to ensure a respectful, secure digital environment.

Key Takeaways

Mr. Sameer Chauhan

UNICC noted that ethical use of ICTs needs to be operating in a secure digital environment under the highest security guarantee, and innovation should be facilitated while keeping cybersecurity front and center in frontier technologies. UNICC has recently launched a cybersecurity fund for the UN family to ensure that all UN systems have a consistent level of cybersecurity measures.

H.E. Mr. Grigoriy Borisenko

The Russian Federation has a National AI Development Strategy for up until 2030 which establishes general ethical principles and standards of behavior that guide voluntary signatories (360 organizations and counting) in the field of AI. The country uses a concept of hybrid regulation (some issues are resolved by regulations, others by means of "soft" law) and has already approved 13 experimental legal regimes in the field of operation of drone systems and unmanned vehicles, as well as in the field of healthcare.

Dr. Kyoung Yul Bae

Dr. Bae contrasted the European approach on tight AI regulations on ethical dimensions versus the American non-regulatory approach which favors AI innovations and business. For the Republic of Korea, the country is ready to enact ethical regulations, in a more focused manner on specific segments, e.g. self-driving cars, generative AI, manufacturing parts, small and big entrepreneurs.

Ms. Ana Neves

The CSTD Vice-chair highlighted that ethics is about responsibility and integrity, and informs responsible solutions for critical challenges in policy, regulations, and designing functional ICT strategies. In addition, public policy has to ensure every stakeholder in the design and development of intelligent and autonomous systems is educated, trained and empowered to prioritize ethical considerations. Empowerment is key for citizens and also for institutions. Common values and principles from UNESCO, EU, OECD, WEF, Council of Europe, IEEE, Netmundial+10 highlight using the multistakeholder approach in digital transformation to maximize digital policy processes for the common good.

H.E. Mr. Hubert Vargas Picado

Costa Rica shared two pivotal initiatives: The National Cybersecurity Strategy - a comprehensive public policy document that articulates a strategic vision for cybersecurity via an efficient institutional model and fostering the engagement of all stakeholders. The pending National strategy for AI - which will allow Costa Rica to enhance the well-being of its citizens through the prudent application of frontier technology. Costa Rica strives to ensure free access to information, promotes digital literacy and civic participation through online platforms, and full connectivity for indigenous populations before 2030.

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COSTA RICA

H.E. Mr. Hubert Vargas Picado
Vice Minister of Telecommunications
Ministry of Science, Technology and Telecommunications

Question:

How does Costa Rica manage its status as a small country with the positions it has regarding an accessible, neutral, secure internet that guarantees democratic values?

Mr. Chair,

Distinguished representatives of governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations,

It is a profound honor to address this esteemed assembly on behalf of the Republic of Costa Rica.

Participating in this high-level event, a pivotal milestone on the global stage, is both a privilege and a momentous occasion. As we mark the twentieth anniversary of the Geneva Plan of Action, it is indeed the suitable time to engage in thorough discussions, analyses, and reflections on our collective achievements, while also identifying the challenges that lie ahead to ensure that future generations can continue to harness the benefits of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

The global landscape has undergone significant transformations since 2003, and Costa Rica has been no exception. We have evolved from a telecommunications market dominated by a single state-owned operator to a dynamic, robust and competitive market with multiple operators, thereby enhancing the benefits for end users. This evolution has brought about notable advancements in network coverage and the penetration of both fixed and mobile services. Concurrently, we have faced emerging challenges, particularly in the domain of cybersecurity.

As a nation committed to peace, Costa Rica, devoid of a standing army, has encountered the harsh reality that cybercriminals exploit vulnerabilities without respect for national boundaries. Nevertheless, we have been fortunate to witness the solidarity and support of friendly nations and international organizations, which have been instrumental in our efforts to fortify our cybersecurity infrastructure and governance framework.

In response to these challenges, Costa Rica has embarked on a series of strategic initiatives and public policies aimed at leveraging technology to enhance the lives of our citizens and promote the secure use of the Internet. I wish to underscore two pivotal initiatives:

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Firstly, the implementation of the National Telecommunications Development Plan, which serves as a strategic framework for the telecommunications sector. This plan delineates specific objectives and goals designed to benefit vulnerable populations, including expanding connectivity to remote areas, ensuring telecommunications access in indigenous territories, identifying and addressing barriers to infrastructure deployment, promoting digital literacy, and intensifying efforts to prevent and respond to the online sexual exploitation and abuse of children and adolescents.

Secondly, the launch of the National Cybersecurity Strategy, a comprehensive public policy document that articulates a strategic vision for cybersecurity. This strategy employs an efficient institutional model aimed at enhancing the leadership of the national government and fostering the engagement of all stakeholders. It embraces a human rights approach and is aligned with the overarching goal of building an inclusive society across all dimensions of Costa Rican life.

Costa Rica remains resolute in its commitment to addressing these challenges and enhancing the well-being of its citizens through the diligent and prudent application of technology. Today, we celebrate the realization of this significant event, which will undoubtedly propel our society towards further progress.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the executive secretariat for their diligent efforts in bringing this forum to fruition, as well as to ITU, UNESCO, UNDP, UNCTAD, and the Swiss Confederation for their unwavering support.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

H.E. Mr. Grigoriy Borisenko
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation

Question:

Your Excellency, in today's world many countries are paying close attention to the operation of the information society and its ethical implications, including the use of artificial intelligence. I would like to know if Russia is following a similar approach and what measures Russia does at the government level in this area.

Twenty years ago, WSIS in Geneva emphasized that the information society must be based on shared values and concern for the common good, as well as prevent abuses in the use of ICTs, and all stakeholders must take more fully into account the ethical dimension in the use of ICTs.

Unfortunately, in the modern information society, the use of achievements of scientific and technological progress in a number of cases is carried out in the opposite direction from moral goals. Among the most pressing are ethical issues related to violations of privacy, ethical conduct on the Internet, respect for intellectual property rights, etc. International cooperation in the field of AI governance is necessary to comprehensively assess and address the potential impact of AI systems on society and individuals, and to promote coordination and interoperability among emerging AI governance systems.

The explosive growth of digital transformation has brought artificial intelligence to the forefront as a key element. Russia, while actively developing AI technologies, pays special attention to ethical aspects.

In our country, as part of the National AI Development Strategy for the period until 2030, a Code of Ethics in the field of artificial intelligence has been developed. This Code establishes general ethical principles and standards of behavior that should guide participants in relations in the field of artificial intelligence in their activities. The Code applies to relationships related to the ethical aspects of the creation (design, construction, piloting), implementation and use of AI technologies at all stages of the life cycle. Joining the Code is voluntary, and more than 360 organizations and authorities have already joined it. And in March 2024, 10 Russian companies and universities signed the Declaration on the responsible development and use of generative AI. We proceed from the concept of hybrid regulation, when some issues are resolved by regulations, and some by means of "soft" law. The country has already approved 13 experimental legal

regimes in the field of operation of unmanned aircraft systems and unmanned vehicles, as well as in the field of healthcare.

In addition, when implementing the National AI Development Strategy for the period until 2030, it is mandatory to comply with the principle of preventing and minimizing the risks of negative consequences of using AI technologies. In the future, the state plans to establish liability for damage caused to citizens during testing and use of AI. These measures will expand the scope of application of technologies, preventing their uncontrolled use.

We are ready to share not only our best practices, but also our mistakes and lessons learned. We call on all countries to actively cooperate in exchanging experiences in the field of AI management.

In addition, it is during the WSIS Forum and the AI for Good Summit that the Russian Federation calls for prioritizing developing countries, underserved regions, countries and populations. At the same time, we wanted to draw special attention to the inadmissibility of considering the problem of the "digital divide" only as a topic of Internet connection and digital literacy (capacity building). The emerging "digital neocolonialism", in which a narrow circle of digital elites hold the initiative in the field of innovation, primarily in the field of AI, counteract the emergence of comparable competitors in the global market, defend their own dominance and the right to individually manage data flows, contributes to the acceleration of the technological and information gap between developed and developing countries in the field of advanced AI systems.

We consider it important to coordinate the efforts of all AI actors at the national, regional and global levels in order to ensure harmonization of efforts to implement the agreed ethical principles of the information society, and, most importantly, in the field of application of AI. It is necessary to ensure a holistic and coordinated approach to the development of artificial intelligence for the benefit of humanity and its sustainable development.

KOREA (REP. OF)

Dr. Kyoung Yul Bae
President
Korea Information Society Development Institute (KISDI)

Question:

Ethics and practices of AI: Why do they matter and how can they be addressed?

AI must be one of the hottest buzzwords in everyday life as well as in tech world. In fact, it might be almost inconceivable to think of more controversial topics than AI in terms of benefits and concerns to humans. On the benefits side, Forbes summarizes as the followings: AI reduces human errors, automates repetitive tasks & processes, handles big data smoothly, facilitates quick decision-making, enables digital assistants, performs risky tasks efficiently, helps in improving processes & workflows, assist in medical applications, and we can use it anytime and anywhere. To the contrary, the same world-renowned medium also enumerates the challenging issues that we have to deal with AI: Lack of transparency, bias & discrimination, privacy & security risks, ethical priority, power concentration, over-dependence on AI, job displacement, economic inequality, loss of human connection, misinformation & manipulation, to name a few.

History tells us that human development has been achieved from the never-ending interactions between creativity and ethics. Creativity led by new technologies and ethics guided by morally desirable principles are the two fundamental pivots for our better future. It is the reason why we have to share our thoughts to deliberate on the ethical framework and practical methods of AI.

From my point of view, the first and foremost step to establish AI ethics should start from the embedded logic and application process of technology itself. I strongly suggest that we can succeed in maximizing the advantages and mitigating the disadvantages of AI, only when we have a command of AI's technological characteristics and applications. With the line of thought, I propose to take more neutral, technological, objective approach rather than more contextual approach based on different states, communities, locals, individuals, etc.

The second step will be the phase we have to take a look at the idiosyncrasy of AI technology in terms of various applications, effects, and evaluations. It could be quite different depending on the units of adoption and usage such as states, regions, local communities, governments, entrepreneurs, and individual consumers. It must be logically necessary for us to take a more interdisciplinary approach such as ethics, economics, business, politics, sociology, humanities, cultural studies, statistics, data analysis, communications, etc.

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Bureau of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) at UNCTAD

Ms. Ana Neves
Head
Internet Governance Office, Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia Vice-Chair

Question:

What can be done in public policy to strengthen the collective responsibility of all stakeholders to promote an information society that promotes the common good, protects privacy and actively combats abusive and discriminatory behaviour enabled by digital technologies?

Ethics is about responsibility and integrity. Ethics goes hand in hand with responsible solutions.

Attempts to develop public policies in a digitally driven society must include the ethical dimension that will ultimately lead to the integral development of society and, in particular, the human person.

Prior to the in-depth discussions on disinformation, information integrity, privacy and artificial intelligence, the critical challenges were best identified under the headings of policy, regulation, operations and technology. Without denying the importance of these aspects in designing functional ICT strategies, it is equally important to keep in mind the ethical implications of the use of ICT.

The challenge of ethical dialogue is to provide sufficient platforms for people to engage with policy makers and stakeholders in a sustainable way, so that everyone is involved in the discussion of ethical challenges in the use of ICTs. This will raise public awareness of the concerns and it's likely to foster a sense of collective determination to be guided by fundamental values in their choices and use of ICTs.

The ethical dimension is linked to equity, participation, access, social responsibility and capacity building. Empowerment is key, not only for citizens but also for institutions.

The common values and principles emanating from UNESCO, the European Union, the OECD, the World Economic Forum, the Council of Europe, the IEEE and NETmundial+10 on the implementation of public policies in the digital age, through a multi-stakeholder approach to the use of digital technologies and digital transformation, include common terms such as human rights and democracy, free flow of information, freedom of expression, tolerance, cultural diversity, shared responsibility, solidarity, informed consent, privacy and data protection, data quality and integrity, transparency and traceability, inclusion, diversity and fairness.

The ethical dimension involves a sense of participation by all peoples from different cultures in order to maximise the development and use of digital policy processes for the common good.

And public policy must be seen in this context:

- As an incentive for responsible innovation and sustainability, providing a powerful springboard for innovation with societal benefits,

- Demanding responsibility, accountability and governance.

The ethical dimension is not a choice! Setting ethical guidelines ensuring respect for privacy, fairness, transparency, and human rights across all nations is not a choice!

The ethical dimension of Information Society has to be anchored in the UN Charter, International Human Rights Law and other agreed international commitments such as SDGs, therefore it must be: Inclusive, bear in mind the public interest and be rooted in adaptive multistakeholder collaboration.

Public policy has to ensure that every stakeholder involved in the design and development of autonomous and intelligent systems is educated, trained, and empowered to prioritize ethical considerations so that these technologies are advanced for the benefit of humanity.

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SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

H.E. Eng. Iyad Al Khatib
Minister
Ministry of Communications and Technology

Question:

As you know Your Excellency: as technology continues to advance, new ethical challenges arise. For example, the ethical implications of artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, robotics, and other emerging technologies need to be carefully considered to ensure their development and use align with ethical principles and societal values, could you please conduct the ethical use of AI and data?

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Today, I would like to address the topic of the ethical use of emerging technologies, particularly data and artificial intelligence (AI).

As our society becomes more and more dependent on these technologies, we must consider the ethical implications and responsibilities that come with their development and deployment.

Transparency is an important aspect of ethical data use.

People should have a clear understanding of how their data is being collected, used, and shared.

Organizations also need to be transparent about their data practices, providing people with meaningful choices and control over their personal information. This transparency should also cover the AI systems that depend on data.

Bias in AI algorithms is another concern that causes discrimination and social inequalities. We must ensure that AI systems are designed and trained on diverse and representative datasets and that their outputs are regularly audited for biases.

Moreover, accountability is vital when it comes to AI.

Organizations and developers must be responsible for the actions and consequences of their AI systems.

Governments, industry, academia, and civil society must work together to develop and enforce ethical frameworks, codes of conduct, and regulations that promote responsible and inclusive technology development.

In conclusion, the ethical use of emerging technologies requires our utmost attention. Our priority must be privacy, transparency, fairness, and collaboration.

Thank you for your listening and attention.

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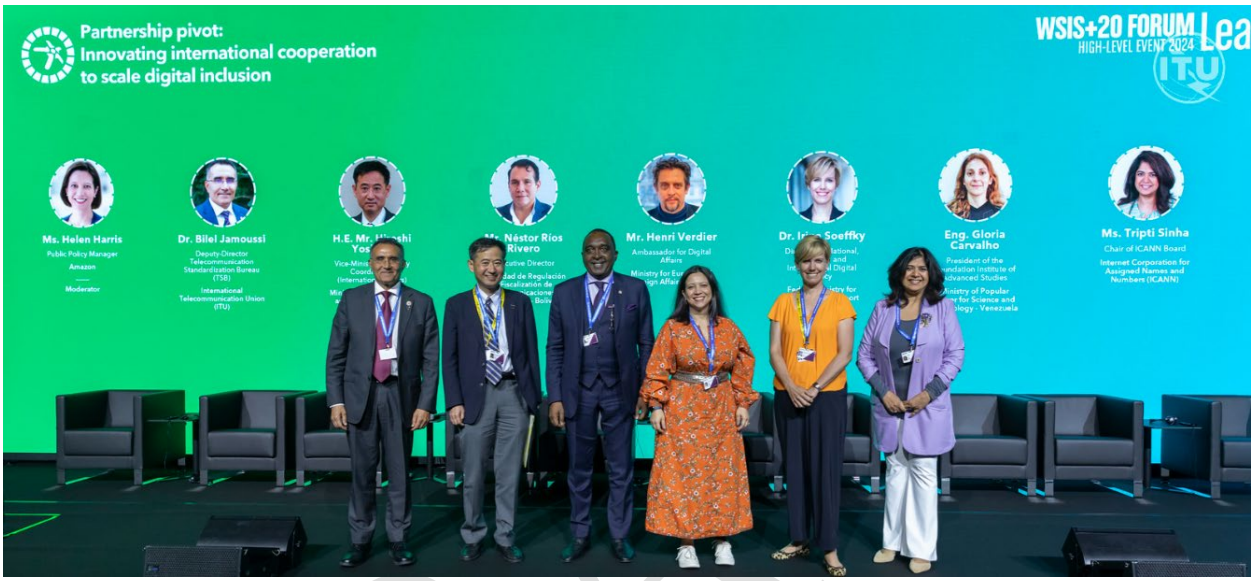
Leaders TalkX: Partnership Pivot: Innovating International Cooperation to Scale Digital Inclusion

Recording: https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/502



Moderated by High-level Track Facilitator:
Ms. Helen Harris, Public Policy Manager, Amazon

UN Representative:
Dr. Bilel Jamoussi, Deputy-Director Telecommunication Standardization Bureau (TSB), International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Speakers:

1. **Japan:** H.E. Mr. Hiroshi Yoshida, Vice-Minister for Policy Coordination (International Affairs), Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications
2. **Germany:** Dr. Irina Soeffky, Director for National, European and International Digital Policy, Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport
3. **Venezuela:** Eng. Gloria Carvalho, President of the Foundation Institute of Advanced Studies, Ministry of Popular Power for Science and Technology
4. **Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN):** Ms. Tripti Sinha, Chair of the ICANN Board
5. **Samena Telecommunications Council:** Mr. Bocar BA, Chief Executive Officer

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Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator

Digital transformation is a multidisciplinary activity. As such, its implementation requires cooperation and collaboration from various departments (across the UN / within governments).

Furthermore, digital inclusion is not limited to merely access to digital technology, but also a matter of ensuring that individuals have access to digital spaces in their local languages. This provides access to information, empowers local communities and integrates their insights into global discussions, thereby catalyzing local innovation and development.

The multi-stakeholder process remains a priority and a key mechanism for international cooperation on digital issues. The importance of WSIS—including IGF—has not changed, and these frameworks should be leveraged for the implementation of the GDC. The IGF, given its multi-stakeholder nature and its adaptability—is the right place to have global, inclusive, human-rights respecting discussions about governance of the Internet and digital technologies. Multistakeholder spaces, such as IGF and ICANN, bring together diverse perspectives and ensure that digital policies benefit from a broad base of expertise and meet the varied needs of global users.

Industry plays an important role, as it is a key player in the development (and deployment) of technology and services. Consequently, it is necessary to deepen the involvement of industry in promoting international cooperation. But in order to secure industry's active participation, government's need to develop flexible, technology-neutral regulatory frameworks that encourage investment and innovation.

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JAPAN

H.E. Mr. Hiroshi Yoshida
Vice-Minister for Policy Coordination (International Affairs)
Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

Question:

What specific actions can be taken to further strengthen international cooperation, one of the WSIS action lines, and what role does the WSIS play in the context of GDC?

The WSIS process has made tremendous progress in connectivity with multi-stakeholder participation while contributing to achieving the SDGs.

On the other hand, 2.6 billion people are still offline and there are many challenges left. In addition, the world's average temperature reached the highest ever in 2023, which was 1.45°C above pre-industrial levels. To ensure that no one is left behind, we need to strengthen "International and Regional cooperation," one of the WSIS Action Lines, and achieve the SDGs.

I would like to highlight two elements necessary to strengthen international cooperation. The first is the involvement of industry.

Industry plays an extremely important role in the digital field as a key player in the development of technology and the provision of services. As such, it is necessary to deepen the involvement of industry in promoting international cooperation.

The ITU has an advantage in that industry is also involved in ITU activities as a sector member. Mr. Onoe, Director of Telecommunications Standardization Bureau, has been promoting industry engagement in particular by strengthening cooperation with the C-level from industry, and Japan is strongly supporting this initiative.

In addition, Japan has decided to contribute approximately 220,000 USD to the ITU to support the "Green Digital Action," a new initiative led by the ITU related to climate change.

Industry involvement is also key in this initiative, and we would like to offer capacity building for developing countries and others through workshops, including seminars and demonstrations of Green Transformation technologies from industry.

Next is the cooperation of international organizations. It is important for each international organization to effectively demonstrate its expertise and work closely together.

In March 2022, UN Secretary-General Guterres launched the Early Warnings for All (EW4ALL) initiative, which has called for every person on Earth to be protected by early warning systems by 2027.

Under this initiative, the UNDRR (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction), WMO (World Meteorological Organization), ITU, and IFRC (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) will work together, and ITU is expected to play a role in the field of warning dissemination and communication.

Japan has contributed over 1 million USD to the Connect2Recover (C2R) project in total and 350,000 USD to the ITU Asia Pacific Regional Office projects to strengthen the resilience of digital infrastructure. From this year, we will focus on contributing to the "Early Warnings for All" initiative.

Finally, the Global Digital Compact (GDC) is scheduled to be adopted at the Summit of the Future in September this year.

It is important to avoid duplication with existing organizations and initiatives and to promote international cooperation in an efficient manner.

Japan attaches great importance to multi-stakeholder processes in the digital field.

The IGF, which was held in Kyoto last year, is a particularly important forum for multi-stakeholder discussion, and I believe that appropriate descriptions should also be reflected in the GDC.

Even after almost 20 years, the importance of WSIS, including the IGF, has not changed, and I believe that we need to leverage WSIS process in implementation and follow-up of the GDC.

Thank you for your attention.

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GERMANY

Dr. Irina Soeffky
Director for National, European and International Digital Policy
Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport

Question:

In early 2024, Germany unveiled its first strategy for international digital policy. How does this strategy promote global collaboration?

Indeed, Germany adopted its first strategy for international digital policy in February.

Our vision is a global digital order that promotes democracy and freedom, prosperity, as well as sustainability and resilience.

To this end, we defined common guiding principles, including:

- protecting human rights – online and offline,
- maintaining a global, open, free, and secure Internet,
- intensifying value-based partnerships on digital technology, fostering human-centred and innovation-friendly rules.

Our strategy is also an example of stakeholder cooperation:

The strategy is informed by a series of intensive and open exchanges with national and international stakeholders. But the strategy is also a commitment to the multi-stakeholder model as such. We consider the multi-stakeholder approach essential for global digital networking. And active commitment in multi-stakeholder formats is a high priority for us.

Therefore, we support the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) as the central global discussion forum for Internet governance and digital policy. We are convinced that the IGF is the right place to have global, inclusive discussions about the governance of the Internet and digital technologies. Yet, it is obvious that our global landscape has fundamentally transformed since 2005. And the IGF has also evolved. It's important to remember that the current mandate of the IGF has not yet been fully realized. The mandate outlined in the Tunis Agenda already contains many components that could guide the evolution of the IGF.

For instance, the mandate specifies that the IGF should "identify emerging issues, bring them to the attention of the relevant bodies and the general public, and, where appropriate, make recommendations."

We believe – and we actually have seen this last year in Kyoto – that discussions on AI and emerging technologies could be seamlessly integrated into the IGF's framework. The IGF shows us that the multi-

stakeholder model is well suited to address not only the challenges of today but also adaptable enough to anticipate the needs of tomorrow.

VENEZUELA

Eng. Gloria Carvalho
President of the Foundation Institute of Advanced Studies
Ministry of Popular Power for Science and Technology

Question:

What is the importance of international cooperation on digital inclusion for countries, and specifically for Venezuela?

[MISSING STATEMENT]

INTERNET CORPORATION FOR ASSIGNED NAMES AND NUMBERS (ICANN)

Ms. Tripti Sinha
Chair of the ICANN Board

Question:

How can ICANN's collaborative governance model guide international collaboration for successful digital projects and WSIS Action Line implementation, particularly to scale digital inclusion?

The Internet is an indispensable global resource. Its continued evolution requires thoughtful and inclusive governance. As we navigate the complexities of digitalization and the need to scale for worldwide digital inclusion, fostering cooperation among diverse stakeholders is crucial. Collaborative efforts ensure that the Internet remains a trusted, accessible, and secure platform for all.

ICANN's multistakeholder governance model emphasizes this inclusive approach. Our model can serve as a blueprint to foster international collaboration on digital projects, such as implementing the WSIS Action Lines to increase digital inclusion. ICANN involves multiple stakeholders, such as governments, the private sector, civil society, academia, and the technical community, in our decision-making and policy development processes. This approach not only brings diverse perspectives to the table, it also ensures that Internet policies benefit from a broad base of expertise and meet the varied needs of global users.

One of the principal reasons why ICANN's model is highly relevant to increasing digital inclusivity lies in its capacity to engage underrepresented stakeholders and encourage multilateral discussions. This inclusivity is vital for addressing the unique challenges and needs of developing countries. By involving a spectrum of voices, ICANN avoids unanticipated policy consequences and ensures informed, sustainable decision-making that supports global Internet stability and security.

The WSIS Action Lines, which call for enhanced access to information and knowledge as well as the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity, is well aligned with ICANN's work in collaboration with its partners, to advance the multilingual Internet. Our initiatives align with the necessity to make the Internet accessible and useful to non-English speakers worldwide, driving greater digital inclusion. ICANN's efforts to enable domain names in local languages and scripts through programs like Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) and Universal Acceptance (UA) are central to this. These initiatives ensure that users around the globe can access the Internet and local content in their native languages, making connectivity more meaningful.

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The establishment of the Coalition for Digital Africa showcases ICANN's proactive approach to enhancing digital inclusion in specific regions. The Coalition brings together various stakeholders, such as the International Telecommunications Union, Association of African Universities, SmartAfrica, and others to enhance Africa's digital infrastructure and domain name industry. It is a prime example of how localized partnerships can drive significant progress in digital inclusion by addressing regional challenges and leveraging local opportunities. These collaborations foster dialogue, share best practices, and stimulate business interests that bolster the digital economy and infrastructure, essential for scaling digital inclusion in underserved regions.

A collaborative and multistakeholder approach, such as the one our governance model fosters, is crucial for international digital projects for several reasons:

- It provides holistic perspectives by integrating various stakeholder views, which helps shape comprehensive Internet governance that addresses multiple aspects of the digital divide.
- By empowering local communities and integrating their insights into global discussions, it helps catalyze local innovation and development, crucial for the sustainable growth of the digital landscape in developing countries.

The result of applying this collaborative, multistakeholder approach is sustainable policy development. The multistakeholder model supports the creation of policies that are more likely to be sustainable and widely accepted, as they have been discussed, researched, and endorsed by a diverse range of contributors. We believe the same principles should apply to efforts aimed at designing successful digital projects to scale inclusion. Such projects are more likely to be sustainable and widely accepted if they are discussed, researched, and supported by a diverse range of contributors.

ICANN's collaborative multistakeholder governance model provides a strong framework for international efforts aimed at digital inclusion and the successful implementation of WSIS Action Lines. Our inclusive approach not only ensures that the Internet remains a global, accessible, stable, and secure resource, but also facilitates targeted initiatives like the Coalition for Digital Africa, which directly contribute to reducing the digital divide in specific regions. As the Internet ecosystem continues to evolve, the principles embodied by ICANN's governance model will remain pivotal in guiding international collaboration towards a more inclusive and equitable digital future. ICANN looks forward to the outcome of the Global Digital Compact discussions and the WSIS+20 review next year. We hope these will further help keep the Internet single, interoperable, stable, secure, and resilient, and will reconfirm the role of all stakeholders in its governance.

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SAMENA TELECOMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL

Mr. Bocar BA
Chief Executive Officer

Question:

In your perspective, what is the single most compelling element that could unite all stakeholders in the pursuit of universal digital inclusion?

Your Excellencies! Dear colleagues and participants!

It is an honor and a pleasure to be here today.

Amid the rapid unfolding of the digital revolution, a significant portion of the global population—estimated at 2.6 billion people—remains disconnected from the transformative potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Our Leaders TalkX session at WSIS 2024 serves as a pivotal platform for addressing these enduring digital divides, advocating for heightened international collaboration as a cornerstone of global digital inclusion strategies. Grounded in the WSIS Geneva Plan of Action and particularly emphasizing Action Line C11 on international and regional cooperation, our discourse underscores the necessity of foundational connectivity for both societal and economic inclusion. The dialogue draws upon diverse perspectives from governments, the private sector, international organizations, and the United Nations to explore the critical need for strategic partnerships and innovative financing models aimed at expanding digital access.

Our success of achieving digital inclusion between 2025 and 2030 will be influenced by our progress made in unlocking capital through collaboration and partnership. Reflecting upon the recent discussions on universal broadband financing frameworks, SAMENA Council champions a consensus-driven collaborative approach to institutionalizing funding mechanisms. As co-chairs of the UN Broadband Commission's former Working Group on 21st Century Financing Models to Bridging the Digital Divide, we have actively shaped the discourse on creating a diverse and sustainable financial base for broadband development. Our engagement has culminated in broad stakeholder endorsement of foundational principles for a Universal Broadband Financing Framework at the 21st Century Advocacy Group London Meeting in November 2023, heralding a new era of investment and accessibility in infrastructure, particularly for un- and underserved communities.

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Unlocking access to capital is key. Looking forward, SAMENA Council articulates several strategic initiatives and policy recommendations essential for achieving our vision of a universally connected world. We are committed to expanding the financial base for broadband, aligning with insights from the 21st Century Financing Models for Bridging the Connectivity Gap BBCom Working Report, the outcomes of BBCom's Annual Fall Meeting 2023 and the follow-up 21st Century Advocacy Group London Meeting at Vodafone's offices in November 2023. There is an imperative to diversify the contributors and contributions to broadband funding, extending not only beyond traditional telecommunications entities to include Global Digital Platforms and other sector stakeholders benefiting from broadband infrastructure; but new innovative financing and funding models are of the essence to building a sustainable contributing base to broadband infrastructure for long-term success.

Building on our leadership role within the Broadband Commission, we advocate for financing models that integrate public and private capital. These models should ensure robust investments and foster equitable access, leveraging the collective capabilities of diverse stakeholders. We call on governments to implement flexible, technology-neutral regulatory frameworks that not only encourage investment and innovation but also ensure that the benefits of digital transformation are shared widely and equitably. This includes establishing regulatory parity and more local engagement and investment by global players.

Enhancing international and regional partnerships is crucial for sharing best practices, achieving regulatory harmonization, and undertaking collaborative projects aimed at closing the digital divide. The SAMENA Telecommunications Council remains dedicated to spearheading initiatives that promote a digitally inclusive global society. By pooling our collective resources and expertise, we are poised to address the barriers to connectivity and significantly advance toward universal digital inclusion. As we anticipate future discussions at GSR 2024, the BBCom Annual Fall Meeting 2024, and beyond, the Council is optimistic about the ongoing collaborative efforts that will continue to shape our interconnected future.

Thank you!

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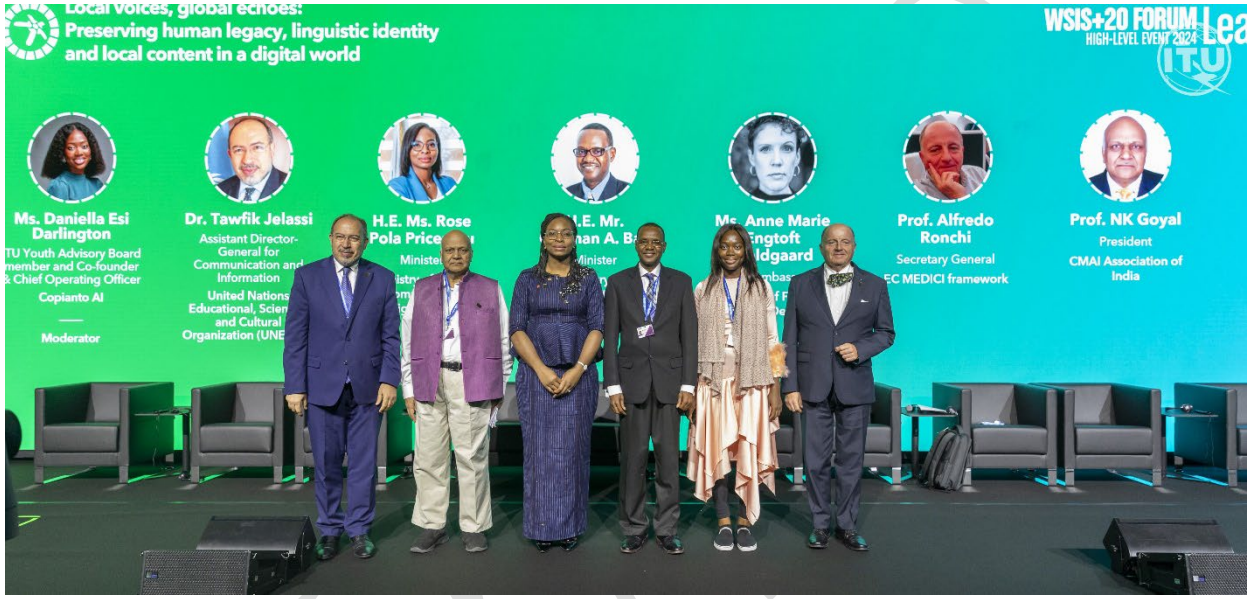
Leaders TalkX: Local Voices, Global Echoes: Preserving Human Legacy, Linguistic Identity and Local Content in a Digital World

Recording: https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/502



Moderated by High-level Track Facilitator:
Ms. Daniella Esi Darlington, ITU Youth Advisory Board member and Co-founder & Chief Operating Officer at Copianto AI

UN Representative:
Dr. Tawfik Jelassi, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, UNESCO

Speakers:

1. **Guinea:** H.E. Ms. Rose Pola Pricemou, Minister, Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications, and Digital Economy
2. **Gambia:** H.E. Mr. Ousman A. Bah, Minister, Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy
3. **Denmark:** Ms. Anne Marie Engtoft Meldgaard, Tech-Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
4. **EC MEDICI Framework:** Prof. Alfredo Ronchi, Secretary General
5. **CMAI Association of India:** Prof. NK Goyal, President
6. **International Trademark Association (INTA):** Ms. Dana Northcott, President

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Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator

Fresh Priorities

• Digitalizing local archives and cultural content to make them accessible online: (H.E. Mr. Ousman A. Bah, Minister, Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy).

• Empowering local content creators to develop content in indigenous languages to preserve cultural diversity and history: H.E. Ms. Rose Pola Pricemou, Minister, Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications, and Digital Economy.

• Developing multilingual tools and platforms to facilitate cultural and linguistic diversity.

• Integrating local languages into education sector curriculum to promote linguistic identity: (Gambia)

• Continuing collaboration with partners to develop human capital for local content and digital solutions in local languages (Gambia).

• Organizing global conferences on language technologies to address the linguistic divide in the digital age: (Tawfik Jelassi, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)).

Emerging Trends

The vast majority of the world's languages are missing from the digital world. While there are over 7,000 languages spoken globally, only a handful are currently represented online. UNESCO's Tawfik Jelassi emphasized this gap. To bridge the divide, speakers from Gambia, India and Denmark proposed using technologies like artificial intelligence and machine learning to digitize archives, translate content, and develop tools that make local languages more accessible online.

Opportunities

Digitizing local content and indigenous manuscripts can help preserve cultural heritage. A key theme that emerged across various speakers was the importance of promoting multilingualism in the digital space. Prof. NK Goyal from India specifically emphasized this point, along with the need for creating digital content in local languages and facilitating access to digital tools and infrastructure for local communities. He also highlighted the importance of collaboration, raising awareness and leveraging communication channels. Ms. Dana Northcott, representing the International Trademark Association, provided an international perspective. She discussed the importance of multistakeholder collaboration, including efforts by ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) to expand the use of non-English characters online. This highlights the need for international cooperation to create a truly inclusive digital space.

Key Challenges

• The large linguistic divide that exists digitally, with only a few dozen languages present online while over 7000 languages are used globally. This poses a major challenge to inclusion.

• Homogenization of online content, with most content produced in a few dominant languages, posing a threat to cultural and linguistic diversity.

• Lack of local language content and tools, making internet access difficult for those who don't speak dominant languages.

• Risk of certain indigenous and minority languages becoming endangered or extinct if not preserved digitally.

• Heavy consumption of foreign content in some countries poses challenges to promoting local cultures and languages.

• Gender biases and online harassment amplified by technologies, disproportionately impacting women.

• Potential for "meta life" to blur boundaries with real life and shape public perceptions in harmful ways.

• Ensuring local voices and perspectives are reflected in technology development and policymaking to avoid marginalization.

Case Examples

• UNESCO initiatives like creating a word atlas of languages, promoting multilingualism, and organizing a global conference on language technologies.

• Guinea developing multilingual tools/platforms, regulating content, digitizing archives, and promoting local creators.

• Gambia prioritizing digital library, integrating local languages in education, and promoting indigenous digital solutions.

• India's government has built the Bhashini-Translation's ASR software to simultaneously translate content into local languages globally.

• Denmark promoting local perspectives to shape digital futures and ensure diversity online.

• INTAs advocacy for universal acceptance of non-ASCII domain names to enhance accessibility.

• Technological advancements like AI/ML to digitize archives, translate content, and develop local language tools.

• Countries like Gambia and Guinea are taking a proactive approach to bridge the digital divide. They've implemented national policies emphasizing inclusive connectivity, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and local content development. For instance, Gambia's Entrepreneurship Policy and the ICT Agency Act 2019 both prioritize the development of local digital solutions and content, ensuring their citizens have access to information and tools in their native languages.

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GUINEA

H.E. Ms. Rose Pola Pricemou
Minister
Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications, and Digital Economy

Question:

How does your country plan to collaborate with local and international partners to develop multilingual tools and platforms that facilitate cultural and linguistic diversity, and what strategies are in place to encourage the participation of indigenous peoples in this process?

[MISSING STATEMENT]

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GAMBIA

H.E. Mr. Ousman A. Bah
Minister
Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy

Question:

What are some of the measures the Gambia Government is taking to help preserve human legacy, linguistic identity, and local content development in the digital era?

The digital era offers opportunities to archive and preserve our cultural and historical legacies. We must invest in robust digital archiving systems that ensure our historical documents, traditions, and artifacts are digitized and made accessible to future generations.

Emerging technologies like artificial intelligence can play a vital role in preserving human legacy and can help in cataloguing and restoring old manuscripts. They are vital in creating multilingual Websites and Apps allowing government services and information in multiple local languages.

On preserving human legacy, the Gambia government is prioritising the roll out of local digital libraries to preserve legacy knowledge and ensure access for current and future generations – This Ministry will provide support to put in place the requisite ICT infrastructure to help realise this objective.

The Ministry will work closely with key stakeholders including the Ministry of Information, National records office, the National Centre for Arts and Culture and the National Museum to ensure digital versions of scholarly and other research are available through open platforms as envisaged in the Open Data Policy and strategy of the Gambia.

Linguistic Identity

The Gambia recognizes the importance of preserving our linguistic identity and as such there are ongoing strides to integrate our local languages in the education sector - a dedicated curriculum has been launched in the two major local languages - Mandinka and Wolof.

We also continue to promote the integration of local languages in the digital space especially on citizen centric services deployed by businesses, government and the donor community

Recognizing the importance of digital literacy, we seek to implement programs to equip citizens with the skills needed to create, access, and manage digital content, pushing for more local content.

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Inclusivity is central in our policies, as such, we are currently championing the cause for inclusive, equitable and affordable access to meaningful connectivity and digital platforms to all, regardless of their socio-economic status, this is essential for preserving and promoting human legacy and linguistic identities.

In the sector education, ICT is a central pillar of the education policy 2016-2030 and the government has partnered with donor organizations to roll our ICT education and also provide the necessary ICT devices to support learning across all levels.

Local Content Development: We also recognize the significance of local content development especially in this digital era.

Ongoing initiatives to spur research and development of home-grown ICT products and services include the establishment of tech hubs as centres of innovation across all regions and a potential game changing national technology park.

On the policy front, the Entrepreneurship policy of the Gambia and the ICT agency act 2019 advocates for local content development and the promotion of indigenous digital solutions- to achieve this objective, we believe it is essential to continue to collaborate with our development partners to scale up human capital especially in the area of STEM to help realise this goal.

We also recognise the importance of promoting the utilization of Digital Media as a viable vehicle to proliferate positive local content that inspires the strive for inclusive sustainable development.

Call for actions

We call upon governments to develop and implement policies that prioritize digital literacy, infrastructure development, and the protection of intellectual property rights for local content creators. We call for the implementation of a global program to digitize and preserve all indigenous languages for future generations.

We call for the promotion of south-south cooperation on the development of viable solutions that support the course for the preservation of human legacy, linguistic identity and local content development.

We seek for potential partners to support the development of a local content policy for the Gambia.

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DENMARK

Ms. Anne Marie Engtoft Meldgaard
Tech Ambassador
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Question:

Why are local perspectives so crucial in shaping our digital future? Is it even realistic that local voices can find their way to the global stage?

Thank you to the organizers and the ITU for elevating this topic of the local vs. the global. Which really sits at the core of the major global governance discussion we are having this year. Also want to thank my fellow panelists for insightful remarks.

I recently attended Netmundial in São Paolo, which gathered internet and technology experts – many of whom are here today. One thing was especially repeated: the asymmetry between stakeholders in terms of power, skills, knowledge, and access.

Unfortunately, I think the current state of global governance conversations on technology reflects this asymmetry. The silos. Sometimes even the distrust. That is why this conversation about making local voices into global echoes is so important.

[Lessons learnt from years of internet governance]

In São Paolo, I learnt that we have already come far. There are a great number of coalitions and fora that demonstrate how we can create inclusive dialogues and processes. Where all sectors and all corners of the world are represented.

This is true for the Internet, and for many of the institutions and processes that have their home right here in Geneva. The model of inclusive multistakeholder collaboration and governance is at the heart of the Internet's resilience and its socioeconomic benefits for people around the world.

But we must not forget that a third of the world's population does still not enjoy these benefits. Access to the Internet and the use of AI-models in content curation on digital platforms are two crucial challenges that risk further marginalizing already marginalized groups. AI used in content moderation or recommender systems determine what we see online.

The very business models of the tech companies, including the latest AI-revolution of the ChatGPT's of the world, push journalism and especially local media, at the edge of extinction.

[Inclusion and diversity as a means and an end]

Local voices, context, perspective, as well as local needs and aspirations must be reflected in shaping our digital world. That is the only way digital technologies can deliver on our shared goals.

We will never spot the challenges, the harms, the missed opportunities if we do not include voices not just from every layer of society, but from geographies around the world.

The internet does not consist of only politicians and world leaders. The Internet is thriving because of millions of local voices that enter into communities and shape bonds across borders. Really making the internet what it is today.

This is why, diversity and pluralism is a cornerstone of well-functioning societies, it's good for business and for democracies. That is also true for the online world.

For disinformation, diversity of content can be an antidote. Instead of the Internet being flooded with bot-generated content, disinformation, hate speech – we should focus on how we can enhance the diversity of local information online.

Let me end by emphasizing that inclusion and diversity is both a means and an end. For global processes such as the Global Digital Compact, the WSIS review, we should seek inclusion in the processes to determine the outcome, we want. Only that way can we ensure that the digital future will be responsive to the needs and aspirations of people globally.

EC MEDICI FRAMEWORK

Prof. Alfredo Ronchi
Secretary General

Question:

Prof. Ronchi, WSIS celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, what are the key aspects and main results achieved thanks to this global multi-stakeholder initiative?

On the twenty years WSIS anniversary, I would like to outline the relevance of the WSIS process and its Action Lines as the key open forum where stakeholders can debate, share ideas, propose solutions.

We are facing a significant turning point based on a portfolio of enabling technologies spanning cyber, nano and bio. The "cyber" component seems to have, currently, the most relevant impact on large part of society involving privacy, freedom, labour, security, lifestyle, and more. It is not under question the added value and the achievements due to digital technology; this session looks at the digital world from the humanities side, considering the mid- and long-term impact on society with specific reference to human legacy, local content, and cultural and linguistic identity.

Since the dawn of digital technology, the number of application and solutions based on this technology has had an astonishing growth rate, computers overlapped more and more with any activity, reshaping society, impacting lifestyles. Social media, global content providers are "training" young generations offering all-over the world "standard" content that will impact future generations and jeopardise cultural diversities.

By leveraging on laziness and relaxation citizens spend less time outside the home, shop online, purchase food and drinks delivered on their table, "meet" friends on Zoom or WhatsApp, interact with the "external environment" though the mediation of social media and video clips.

Since more than two decades we are wrapped in our personal cyber-sphere in a kind of symbiotic relation, experience the world thanks to an approach mediated by cyber devices; the "new reality" is the one provided by them. So far, digital technology has mainly acted as a human isolation technology even if in a cyber crowd of "friends", this has created a "solitude" relation with our terminal, a smart phone, gaming console or laptop.

Here it comes the potential role of the Metaverse. According to the current perspective the Metaverse will progressively create a clone of our environment, one of the foreseeable risks is a kind of addiction to this "parallel life" training users to shift from real to Meta-life blurring the border between them. Meta-life may

propose a new normal that once accepted in the Meta-life could be accepted in the real life. The same obviously applies to mainstream information and opinion dynamics, especially if perceived as real and reliable. Opinion formation is a complex and dynamic process mediated by interactions among individuals both offline and online. Social media have drastically changed the way opinion dynamics evolve. Social media has become a battlefield on which opinions are exchanged, often violently.

Post-reality is changing the value system with the "new normality". The new ethics calls into question personal free will and freedom of choice; traditional cultural regulators of social relationships and processes are being replaced by automated social algorithms.

While AI will benefit citizens, businesses, and public interests it will create risks to fundamental rights, due to potential biases, privacy infringements or, as an example, a potential concern could be the idea to solve serious ethical dilemmas simply referring to an AI proxy to feel released from a personal ethical analysis and related responsibilities.

We feed AI systems mainly with big data from western countries this can lead, as it happens in case of minoritized languages, to the disappearance of other "intelligence". The progress of AI has allowed the development of much more powerful nudge mechanisms thanks to the effectiveness of statistical and inferential AI systems. Citizens are increasingly using AI "bots" to carry out different activities ranging from writing a poem to creating a deep fake. How can we identify a human "product" from a machine product? "Local content" will be soon generated by "local" bots?

Furthermore, a massive decrease in the level of critical thinking and the emergence of waves of information epidemics are observed both nationally and globally. Public perception, shaped more by addressing predetermined feelings and opinions rather than facts.

The challenges for the upcoming years are the ways to sustain the human's role and the inviolable right to freedom and personal privacy in an era of unlimited collection and reuse of information. Once again, the need to find a proper balance between humanities and technologies is omnipresent. Social sciences and humanities must establish a tight cooperation in the design or co-creation of cyber technologies always keeping humans in the focus.

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CMAI ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

Prof. NK Goyal
President

Question:

With varied culture language around globe, what do you suggest for digital empowerment?

[MISSING STATEMENT]

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INTERNATIONAL TRADEMARK ASSOCIATION (INTA)

Ms. Dana Northcott
President

Question:

INTA is well-known for representing the interests of brand owners. It is dedicated to the protection of trademarks and complementary intellectual property (IP) to foster consumer trust, economic growth, and innovation. It is also committed to building a sustainable future through brands. How does the protection of linguistic identity and local content fit into your organization's mission?

Thank you for this question. Before I begin my substantive response, I would also like to thank ITU Secretary General Doreen Bogdan-Martin, the WSIS sponsors and organizers and my fellow high-level panelists. We are honored to participate on this panel and in the WSIS Forum High-Level Event. These discussions are critical during a time of accelerated advances in technology and the growing need to preserve local content and the rights of creators and innovators.

At INTA, we believe the key to the continued development of open, sustainable, and inclusive digital spaces is the ongoing commitment to meaningful multistakeholder involvement at the local, national, and supra national levels. This includes transparent and open collaboration with all stakeholders to create balanced policies that improve everyday lives, especially for non-English speaking and writing communities that have been so often left behind.

INTA is well positioned to provide the technical and policy expertise to advance the SDGs. INTA's mission is complementary to the SDGs in that it seeks sustainable answers to global challenges. I would like to talk to you specifically about SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure.

One of the most important pieces of infrastructure is the Internet. The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, or ICANN, is at the center of maintaining the world's system of names and numbers identifiers that enables the Internet as we know it. INTA has leaned into the efforts within ICANN to enhance the availability of domain names in local languages, not just English and the languages of wealthy nations. INTA advocates for universal acceptance of top-level domain names consisting of non-ASCII characters. ASCII, or the Roman Alphabet, has been the dominant character set on the Internet which makes access exceedingly difficult for people who do not use the ASCII system in their native language.

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INTA participates in the ICANN multistakeholder model primarily through the efforts of the Intellectual Property Constituency (IPC), of which I happen to be a member. This is not a small effort on INTA's part nor one that is staffed as an afterthought. Indeed, INTA was one of the founding members of the IPC back in 1999 and has retained a leadership role throughout the IPC's existence. In fact, the sitting IPC President is INTA's Senior Director of Internet Policy. INTA has been able to leverage its influence to ensure that ICANN continues its focus on expanding access to non-ASCII languages within the domain name system, which are often referred to as "Internationalized Domain Names" or IDN's while also enhancing the acceptance of such non-ASCII domain addresses throughout the world. In this way, local voices and content are being heard, seen, and preserved. This is important work.

For example, INTA members advocate for clear rules that govern the introduction of Internationalized Domain Names since 2005. They are an opportunity for local entrepreneurs to enter the domain name space more easily. In fact, INTA has a member serving on the Expedited Policy Development Process on Internationalized Domain Names. INTA is providing its expertise and interventions as necessary to ensure a positive outcome for local voices and content and brand owners.

Likewise, through its members in the IPC, INTA actively partners with ICANN's Universal Acceptance Steering Group (UASG) which is a "a volunteer-led initiative tasked with undertaking activities that effectively promote Universal Acceptance (UA) through its multiple working groups, local initiatives, and UA Ambassadors. The group is made up of more than 500 individuals representing multiple organizations, businesses, and the ICANN community… Local language domain names can only succeed if they are treated equally and can be used by all.

Internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems. UA provides the gateway to the next billion Internet users." You can access more information on ICANN's website.

INTA is carefully following new work to explore how diacritical symbols may be represented in domain names. We look forward to solutions to the complicated, yet solvable, problem of how to balance the need to have a representative space on the internet in one's own language and script against the risk of consumer confusion, and potential for deception and fraud, which may be posed where strings which are visually confusingly similar.

Finally, INTA itself serves as a powerful thought leader and an important forum for the exchange of perspectives from around the world. INTA's membership numbers 6400 organizations, consisting of representatives of industry, small businesses, the legal community, and academia from 181 jurisdictions. Through its in-person and virtual education sessions, and grassroots engagement via a robust committee structure, INTA members can identify and share emerging issues and work towards the development of solutions. Our 40 committees cover a broad range of topics including Internet, Brands and Innovation, Anti-Counterfeiting and Data Protection, Enforcement and Indigenous Rights among others,

INTA recognizes that it is critical to continuously monitor and address these issues to ensure maximum access of local voices and content to the Internet. This is key to our mission and promoting good for the world. Thank you for including me in this important discussion.