

**INTERSESSIONAL PANEL OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION
ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)**

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**CSTD 2019-2020 priority theme on ‘Harnessing rapid technological change for inclusive
and sustainable development’**

Statement submitted by

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

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Intervention by ITU on 7th November

CSTD 2019–2020 Inter-sessional Panel

Theme 1: Harnessing rapid technological change for inclusive and sustainable development

- As the UN’s specialized agency for Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), ITU is committed to connecting all the world's people – wherever they live and whatever their means. ICTs are a huge enabler and means of implementation across all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and have great potential to help achieve sustainable development and transform people’s lives for the better everywhere.
- We are living in a time of extraordinary advances at the intersection of various fields of innovation. Mobile is one of the most far-reaching technologies in history, and it has developed more rapidly than any other technology. And new technologies are emerging – from the Internet of Things to artificial intelligence to blockchain to 5G. These new and emerging technologies hold great potential for human progress, enabling innovations in areas such as health, financial services, education, agriculture, energy and transport, in smart cities and smart villages. They will be essential for the realization of every single one of the SDGs.
- Importantly, ITU research finds that the benefits of ICTs are not confined to developed economies. ITU assists LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS by implementing activities, programmes and projects to increase their capacity to participate fully in, and benefit from the opportunities of, the information society. Our recent study on the economic impact of broadband in these countries showed that both fixed and mobile broadband have a positive economic impact in the most vulnerable countries. The economic impact increases as broadband penetration increases and is actually greater for these countries than for other developing and developed countries.
- Central to ITU's strategy to leverage the power of ICTs to accelerate progress on the SDGs is the “four I's” framework based on building Infrastructure, securing Investment, promoting Innovation and ensuring Inclusivity.
- ITU has also developed a SDG Mapping Tool that illustrates how ITU activities contribute to the SDGs. ITU is the custodian of the SDG indicators 4.4.1, 5.b.1, 9.c.1, 17.6.2 and 17.8.1 and responsible for tracking them at the international level.
- ITU plays a leading role in managing the radio spectrum and developing globally applicable standards for IMT-2020. Its activities support the development and implementation of international regulations and standards to ensure that 5G networks are secure, interoperable, and that they operate without causing or receiving harmful interference to or from adjacent services. Based on its experience designing standards for International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT) in 2G, 3G and 4G, ITU is convening the leading engineers and experts in mobile and fixed backhaul technologies to work on 5G and future generations of

mobile broadband services. Under ITU's IMT-2020 programme, ITU membership is developing the international standards to achieve well-performing 5G networks.

- Facilitating conducive policy and regulation, ITU regularly brings together heads of ICT regulatory authorities from around the world to share views and developments on AI and other pressing regulatory issues, address questions of governance and strengthen collaboration to use AI for good. The 3rd edition of the AI for Good Global Summit was organized by ITU in Geneva on 28-31 May 2019 and highlighted AI projects in fields including education, healthcare and wellbeing, social and economic equality, space research, and smart and safe mobility.
- The ITU Focus Group on Machine Learning for Future Networks, including 5G, has been examining how technical standardization can support emerging applications of machine learning in fields such as Big Data analytics, as well as security and data protection in the coming 5G era.
- ITU works in all regions of the world and develops tailored programmes to allow everyone to access and use the Internet, in particular by developing infrastructure for technologies and networks, and enhancing the regulatory and market environment.
- ITU raises awareness and assists countries in developing the policies, legislation, regulations and business practices that promote the digital inclusion of people with specific needs. These include indigenous peoples, people living in rural areas, people with disabilities, women and girls and youth and children.
- As we sit here, virtually all of us with one or more connected devices, it is critical to recall that close to half of the world's population is still not using the Internet, let alone the new technologies. The risk is that if not managed properly, the wave of technological change might in fact deepen the inequalities between the digital "haves" and the "have-nots."
- The digital divide itself has many faces. There are gaps in coverage, speed and affordability, gaps between developing and developed nations, between cities and villages, between the young and the older, and between men and women online. This is deeply concerning including because lack of adequate infrastructure and access to ICTs and digital skills for women and girls limits their educational opportunities and access to labour markets.
- Now is the time to invest in key ICT infrastructure regulatory frameworks and to address the demand side factors that will help bring everyone into the benefits that the digital age offers. Together, we can turn today's digital revolution into a development revolution. At ITU, we are working hard on all these fronts, seeking to promote investment in digital infrastructure, digital literacy, cybersecurity including child online protection, and local content in local languages. We need to ensure that connectivity is meaningful, affordable, safe and relevant.
- The World Radiocommunication Conference 2019, which is taking place in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt at present will help support the development of a 5G environment and for the rapid evolution of ICTs. WRC-19 plays a critical role in helping achieve many of the SDGs, such as dealing with the accelerating climate crisis, reducing

food shortages, improving safety in transportation systems in the air, on land, and on the sea, while providing improved connectivity for people worldwide.

- This year, we celebrated the 10th anniversary of the World Summit on the Information Society Forum in Geneva. Over the last ten years the WSIS Forum has developed as the leading multi-stakeholder ICT for development event in the world with the goal of leveraging ICTs to accelerate progress. It plays an important role in the facilitation and implementation of the WSIS outcomes and the 2030 Agenda. On behalf of ITU, UNESCO, UNDP and UNCTAD, I would like to end by inviting you to the WSIS Forum 2020 (www.wsis.org/forum) that will take place on 6-9 April 2020, Geneva Switzerland.