

DIGITAL INCLUSION FOR LDCs

INNOVATION • GROWTH • SUSTAINABILITY

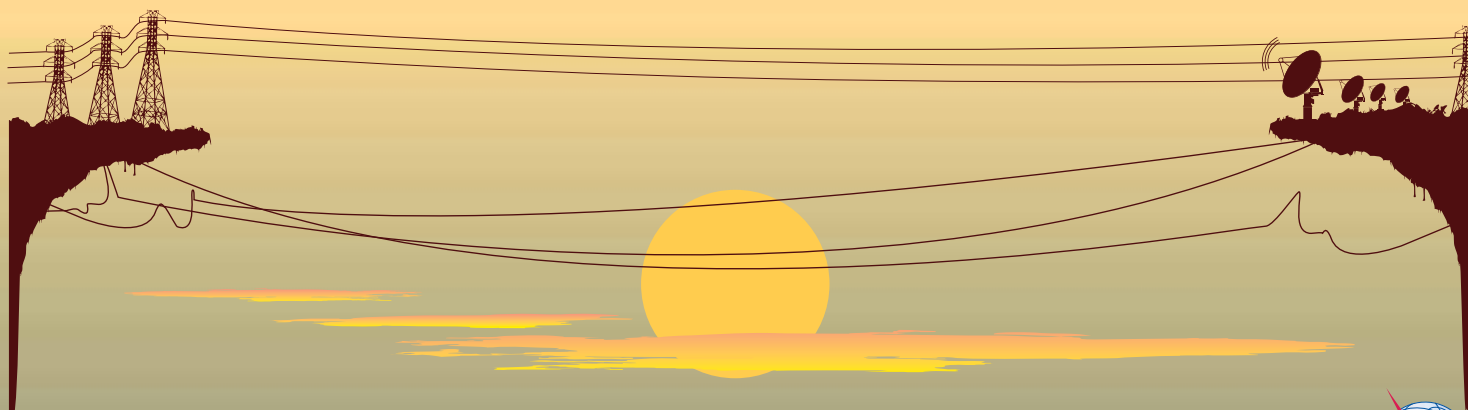
8 - 9 March 2011

ITU, Geneva, Switzerland

FINAL REPORT

ITU PRE-CONFERENCE EVENT
FOR THE FOURTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES (LDC IV)

**Digital Inclusion for LDCs:
Innovation • Growth • Sustainability**



In preparation for the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (UNLDC-IV) to be convened in Istanbul, Turkey, from 9 to 13 May 2011, the International Telecommunication Union organized a pre-conference event in Geneva. The meeting sought to review progress made towards the implementation of the 10-year Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA), and to explore innovative ways of using information and communication technologies as a catalyst in alleviating poverty and stimulating growth in least developed countries under the new Istanbul Programme of Action. The meeting was attended by Senior Government Officials, Ambassadors, Heads of United Nations Organizations, and Civil Society.

Mr. Houlin Zhao, Deputy Secretary-General of ITU, Mr. Brahim Sanou, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU, Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, H.E. Ambassador Oguz Demiralp, Permanent Representative of Turkey to the UN, Geneva, and Mr. Petko Draganov, Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD provided opening remarks.

Following the opening ceremony, an interactive lively high level debate session on **‘Making the MDGs come true for the LDCs’** which was chaired by H.E. Ambassador Khadija R. Masri, Permanent Representative of the African Union to the U.N., Geneva took place. The discussants included Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Mr. Brahim Sanou, Director of Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU, Mr. Petko Draganov, Deputy Secretary General, UNCTAD, Mr. Kiflé Shenkoru, Director, Division for Least Developed Countries, WIPO, Ms. Najat Rochdi, Deputy Director, UNDP Office, Geneva

The first session of the meeting on **‘Information and Communication Technologies in LDCs’** was chaired by Mr. Brahim Sanou, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU. An overview presentation was made by Mr. Cosmas Zavazava, i.a. Chief of Projects and Initiatives Department, BDT, ITU on **‘Unlocking Digital Dividends for the LDCs through ICTs.’** The following were the panelists for this session: H.E. Ambassador Mr. Dinesh Bhattarai, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the U.N., Mrs. Gertrude Akapelwa-Ehueni, Chairperson, Zambia Information Communications Technology Authority, and Mr. Patrick Mwesigwa, Acting Executive Director, Uganda Communications Commission. Panel discussion was followed by the contributions by the remote participants from Benin, India, Austria.

Session II on **‘Creating an Information Society for All: Attaining the World Summit on the Information Society Goals’** was chaired by Mr. Matthias Kern, Basel Convention Secretariat / UNEP. The discussants included Mr. Torbjorn Fredriksson, Chief of ICT Analysis Section Science, Technology and ICT Branch Division on Technology and Logistics, UNCTAD, Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder, Strategy and Policy Advisor, ITU, Mr. Raul Zambrano, Senior Policy Advisor, ICTD & e-Governance UNDP/BDP/DGG, Ms. Susan Teltscher, Head, Market Information and Statistics, ITU, Mr. Víctor Vázquez López, Senior Legal Counsellor, WIPO, Md Shahid Uddin Akbar, Chief Executive Officer, Bangladesh Institute of ICT in Development (BIID).

Session III on **‘Priorities for LDCs under LDC IV with respect to making ICTs more accessible and the driving engine to growth, sustainability through innovation’** was chaired by Mr. Cosmas Zavazava, i.a. Chief of Projects and Initiatives Department, BDT, ITU.

Based on deliberations, the participants adopted the following text and recommended that this should be submitted to the second session of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee for the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries that will be convened from 4 to 8 April 2011 at United Nations Headquarters in New York and subsequently to the fourth United Nations Conference for the LDCs in Turkey:

We, the participants, at the Digital Inclusion for LDCs: Innovation, Growth, and Sustainability, ITU pre-conference event for the LDC-IV, firmly believe that:

- 1.** Following the adoption of an international framework for cooperation which was laid out in the three United Nations programmes of Action (PoAs) for LDCs, the objectives of these three PoAs have not yet been fully met.
- 2.** Progress has been made in many areas particularly in the last decade under the aegis of the Brussels Programme of Action, particularly in the domain of information and communication technologies where governments have put in place an enabling environment for ICT investment, leading to increased investment and growth in mobile networks and services.
- 3.** Information and communication technologies facilitate progress in other sectors such as trade, productive capacities, environment, disaster risk reduction, disaster management, education, gender mainstreaming, health, agriculture, and climate change as these technologies permeate every facet of human life.
- 4.** The inclusive and multi-stakeholder implementation and follow-up process to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is making positive contributions to the creation of an information society in LDCs which has the potential to contribute to employment generation, job-creation, growth, productivity and long-term economic competitiveness.
- 5.** Information and communication technologies play a catalytic role in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability, and develop a global partnership for development). The target for ICTs is the most advanced of all the MDG targets.
- 6.** New technologies such as broadband have great potential for accelerating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by the internationally-agreed deadline of 2015. There is an existing broadband divide between the rest of the world and LDCs that needs to be addressed. Regulated access to broadband and broadband enabled services have to be enhanced.
- 7.** Mobile technologies have gone a long way in contributing towards the bridging of the digital divide in LDCs. However, the access gap to ICTs between rural and urban areas remains an issue to be addressed.
- 8.** The seven convergent and interdependent forces of Policy, Infrastructure, Technology, Innovation, Content and Applications, People and Government which were identified by the Broadband Commission for Digital Development should be harnessed by the international community to build a Broadband Development Dynamic.
- 9.** Global climate patterns are changing and will continue to change at rates unprecedented in recent human history. The impacts and risks associated with these changes are real and already felt in many countries and communities particularly in least developed countries. Climate change threatens global efforts of achieving the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development. Information and Communication Technologies are involved in environment and climate change monitoring, data dissemination and early warning.
- 10.** Government-wide leadership and commitment is needed in establishing appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks that include putting in place pro-ICT tax regimes and ensure that ICT are on top of the agenda in national economic planning. Development of national e-strategies as an integral part of national development plans and poverty reduction strategies plays an important role in turning of the LDC Conference outcomes and WSIS targets into action. Development Partners play an important role in bridging the digital divide in LDCs.

- 11.** ICT data collection, dissemination and analysis are essential for benchmarking and monitoring digital divide and information society. Measurement of the impact of ICTs on socio-economic development in LDCs plays an important role for national strategic planning. Repositories to document the best practices in the area of ICTs in LDCs should facilitate implementation of the Programme of Action. In this regard, the work of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development should be used as a basis to ensure international comparability of ICT data and statistics. Assistance in the area of ICT data collection and processing should be provided to LDCs through support to National Central Statistical Offices that are already involved in statistical data management.
- 12.** Capacity building in the ICT Sector is needed at national and regional level. This assistance is expected to be provided by International Organizations and other development partners.
- 13.** A multi-stakeholder approach is needed and private sector participation is critical. Policy-makers need to engage with industry and investors to promote policy objectives more broadly and attract domestic and foreign investment into the ICT sector. Global solidarity and commitment was felt necessary for achieving the goals of Programme of Action by due date. Multi-stakeholder platforms/initiatives, like Connect the World, may help to mobilize the financial, human and technical resources for addressing development challenges with the use of ICTs.
- 14.** The importance of ICT for development in LDCs has been stated, however financing models for implementation of ICT projects still remains as an urgent necessity to ensure sustainability in mid and long term. Sustainable use of ICTs needs to be considered so that it does not pose threats to health and the environment, in particular when the equipment reaches its end of life. Appropriate e-waste management measures such as recycling, re-use and proper disposal mechanisms are needed in partnership with the international community.
- 15.** Intellectual Property to include issues of patents should contribute to the overall access to technology by LDCs. Measures should be taken to ensure that preferential and differential treatment are put in place in favor of LDCs.
- 16.** In addition to the public sector, financing of ICT infrastructure by the private sector plays an important role in many countries and that domestic financing is being augmented by North-South flows and South-South Cooperation.
- 17.** The international community recognizes the 'power-to-unlock' which comes with ICTs and innovation which should be highlighted in the next Programme of Action for LDCs, and the potential of these technologies to accelerate the achievement of the MDGs and other internally-agreed development goals and key knowledge society priorities such as those of the WSIS by 2015, in the context of the new digital realities and opportunities of the networked society and economy.



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