



The Secretary-General

Geneva, 2 March 2012

CL-81

To all Member States

Contact: G. Fowlie / B. Pluchon
Telephone: +41 22 730 6266
Telefax: +41 22 730 5881
E-Mail: Externalaffairs@itu.int

Subject: ITU call for action for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development – Rio+20

Dear Sir/Madam,

The 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 20-22 June 2012, will bring together the global community to assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the outcomes of the major international conferences held on the topic of sustainable development.

The Conference aims at securing political commitment to sustainable development; assessing progress towards internationally agreed commitments; and identifying solutions to new and emerging challenges. It will contribute to shaping the international development framework for the coming years and will guide our future work at ITU.

ITU together with the Host Country would like to invite all ITU administrations to encourage their national delegations to highlight the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as one of the *major **cross-cutting drivers of sustainable development in the Rio+20 outcome document "The Future we want"***.

We are all convinced that ICTs are a unique cost-effective, environmentally friendly and inclusive instrument to spur green growth and create jobs, promote social progress and the MDGs, and ensure environmental protection and a sustainable future. Let's join our forces to ensure that access to ICTs and Broadband be recognized as a basic infrastructure to move the sustainable development agenda forward and promote a greener and fairer economy.

You will find in Annex, a summary of ITU's key positions and main messages for the Rio+20 process for your due consideration.

Yours faithfully,

(signed)

Paulo Bernardo Silva
Minister of Communications
Brazil

(signed)

Hamadoun I. Touré
Secretary-General
ITU



ITU's key positions and main messages for the Process

Sustainable Development and its three pillars: ICTs as cross-cutting drivers of sustainable development

ITU reiterates that ICTs should be recognized as one of the *major cross-cutting drivers of sustainable development* as they help reinforce, converge and integrate all three pillars of sustainable development and they also support and facilitate attainment of its fundamental underlying principles of efficiency, effectiveness and equity. ICTs are a unique cost-effective, environmentally friendly and inclusive instrument to spur green growth and create jobs, promote social progress and the MDGs, and ensure environmental protection and a sustainable future.

Among concrete outcomes expected from the Conference, ITU supports the *development of a Roadmap*, a conceptual and action-oriented framework setting specific goals and a set of “green economy” tools to achieve them. ITU advocates for inclusion in the text of two such *Sustainable Development Goals relating to ICTs*:

- ICTs as key vehicles and basic infrastructure driving the transition to green economy and sustainable development patterns, to reflect their new multifold role and potential as described above;
- Access to ICTs and to broadband, as a goal itself with direct impact on other basic services and sectors.

Access to ICTs as an integral part of the right to Development:

In our modern interconnected global community, ICTs serve as a multi-media window to the world enabling widespread access to information and reinforcing the human need to communicate. This invokes *Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which guarantees freedom to hold and express opinions across all frontiers and all media. The Internet, wireless connectivity, mobile devices and social media are leading the digital revolution. But most importantly, they are proving to be powerful tools to narrow the knowledge divide, enhance access to services and information, shift behavioral patterns, empower individuals and help reduce poverty as well as assist transforming several sectors and ensuring a sustainable future. ITU together with UNESCO is forging ahead with the Broadband Commission initiative the above challenges and opportunities, advocating for broadband networks and mobile technologies as catalysts for faster progress in achieving the MDGs.

Green Economy: ICTs as a solution provider and a key enabler for the green economy in all sectors

With regards to the theme of the *Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication*, ITU highlights the transformational potential and positive impact of ICTs in multiple areas such as:

- measuring and monitoring;
- regulations and standards;
- capacity building and technology access;
- engagement of industry and ICT sector;
- communication dynamics; and
- social dimension dynamics.

It is of high importance to focus on *concrete strategies and specific tools and sectors* to facilitate and accelerate the transition to a green economy and sustainable development pathways. The role of enabling regulatory frameworks, green or resilient technologies and applications, as well as the active involvement of the private sector, are undeniably crucial to succeed in these efforts. In particular, the role of ***ICTs as a solution provider and a key enabler for the green economy in all sectors such as energy and urbanization*** should be highlighted in this context.

Engagement of Industry and Private Sector

It is also stressed that ***ensuring focused and meaningful engagement of the industry*** and ICT sector is particularly strategic when striving to achieve green economy and sustainable development pathways. Targeting and engaging the private sector remains at the epicenter of green economy strategies as critical to support sectoral greening and shift production patterns and business practices, suggested by regulatory or voluntary standardization schemes. Balanced policies and mechanisms are to put forward promoting eco-innovation, cooperation initiatives and compliance of business. This mix of policy instruments should be supporting models that correct market failures and externalities, create the right incentives for building the business case of greening approaches and innovative partnerships and ensuring implementation of established policies. *ITU stresses its unique position in leveraging contributions from contributions from our private sector membership into the process, and building innovative multi-actors partnership models.*

Support to the UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting and Astana Outcomes

As already recognized by UNECE in the outcome of the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference in Astana, *ICTs are a key enabler for the green economy in all sectors*. ICT applications can reduce environmental impacts and also affect how other products are designed, produced, consumed, used and disposed of. ICTs should be an integral part of any cost-effective and efficient cross-sectoral policies and also of dynamic approaches supporting long-term structural change, green innovation, sustainability and responsible behavioral patterns. Modern technologies such ICTs and broadband networks are revolutionizing, beyond the manufacturing, the services sector providing smart and e-services empowering and enabling access to information for millions of citizens around the globe. They equally revolutionize the energy sector, a priority area at a global and regional level, by means of providing innovative solutions such as smart grids, intelligent buildings and transport systems as well as energy and resource efficient appliances. Therefore, it should be ensure that their full greening transformation potential is captured when crafting specific policy instruments within the context of the green economy Roadmap to be agreed upon in Rio as well as in national or regional action plans.

During the last Regional Preparatory Meeting for UNECE in Geneva, it was also stressed that ***new technologies should be promoted to bolster inclusive participation***, in the effort to reinforce public and stakeholder participation and transparency. This was one of the final recommendations made by UNECE in view of supporting implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration (on public participation, access to information and access to justice) reflected at regional European level in the Aarhus Convention (Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters).