|  |
| --- |
| C:\Users\comas\AppData\Local\Temp\Rar$DRa0.735\jpg\ITU official logo_blue_RGB.jpg**TDAG Working Group on Resolutions, Declaration and Thematic Priorities****9 April 2021, Virtual** |
|  |  |
|  | **Document** **TDAG-WG-RDTP/****36-E** |
|  | **25 March 2021** |
|  | **Original:** **English** |
| Source: | Chairman, TDAG-WG-RDTP |
| **Title:**  | Draft Addis Ababa Declaration |

|  |
| --- |
| **Summary:** This document presents the Chairman of TDAG WG-RDTP’s draft declaration (annexed) that incorporates Membership views as expressed during the 4th meeting of the WG-RDTP held on the 3rd of March 2021.**Action required:**TDAG-WG-RDTP is invited to examine this document and adopt the proposals contained therein.**References:**N/A |

This document presents the Chairman of TDAG WG-RDTP’s draft declaration (annexed) that incorporates Membership views as expressed during the 4th meeting of the WG-RDTP held on the 3rd of March 2021.

The purpose of this draft declaration is to fulfil the mandate given to the TDAG WG-RDTP by TDAG which aims at advancing the preparatory work of WTDC-21 in line with the theme of the next WTDC i.e., *Connecting the unconnected to achieve sustainable development*. The version coming out of the 5th meeting of the TDAG WG-RDTP will together with the other output documents on mainstreaming resolutions, revision of resolution 1 and 2, and thematic priorities be submitted for further consideration by TDAG and possible submission as an input to WTDC-21 where it will be subsequently finalized and adopted.

**Annex: WTDC-21 Draft Declaration**

We, the high-level representatives of ITU Member States and delegates **endorse the present Declaration** at the eighth World Telecommunication Development Conference, which took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 8 to 19 November 2021 under the theme **Connecting the Unconnected to Achieve Sustainable Development**.

**We declare that:**

1. Telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become the foundation for every economic sector and a catalyst for social inclusion, decent employment, and personal growth. Yet, in 2021 some 3.7 billion people remain **unconnected**, of whom 360 million are young people and for them, the transformative power of ICTs remains untapped.
2. **COVID-19** has changed the way we live, work, learn, and do business. In the digital era, connectivity is indispensable and provides opportunities for boosting productivity and efficiency, ending poverty, improving livelyhoods and ensuring that sustainable development becomes a reality for all.
3. Inequalities remain and continue to widen in the use of data and digital ICT-centric technologies, and in the **digitally skilled human resources** between regions, between and within countries, and between women and men. We recognize that affordable, available, dependable, and accessible ICTs when leveraged through adequate digital skills can provide powerful drivers for development, and are instrumental in timely, inclusive and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Insufficient digital capacity and lack of digital skills are also core barriers to **digital inclusion,** **digital transformation, and realization of digital economies**. The demand for digitally skilled workers will increase with the accelerated move towards digital transformation, which can deepen the digital skills gap. While many jobs will be lost due to the economic crisis following the COVID-19 pandemic, the digital economy can nurture new ICT-centric jobs.
5. We have just ten years left to achieve the **Sustainable Development Goals**, and telecommunications/ICTs are agents of change that can shape the future of the world for the better. Telecommunications/ICTs are instrumental in multi-stakeholder activities and sharing of best practices as prescribed by the **World Summit on the Information Society**. Furthermore, multi-stakeholder cooperation offers a platform for all to join forces, seize opportunities and leverage innovations offered by digital technologies while mitigating risks, so that progress towards achieving the Goals by 2030 can be made collectively.
6. **Developing countries**, and in particular **LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS**, face additional challenges in mobilizing sufficient investment and financing for digital infrastructures and require substantial support to provide universal, safe, reliable, and affordable ICTs.

**We commit to working diligently on four key areas, namely Connectivity, Digital Inclusion, Enabling Environment, and Resource Mobilization and International Cooperation by**

1. accelerating the expansion and use of digital infrastructures, services and applications for building and further developing digital economies and societies, including mobilization of financial resources for **connecting the unconnected** communities and schools as soon as possible. This will also include promoting **investments** in broadband infrastructure and access to support sustainable development, encouraging cooperation between Member States and creation of alliances and partnerships between public and private sectors, international funding agencies and other stakeholders.
2. urgently mitigating the impact of disasters and the **COVID-19** pandemic through bold and innovative national plans and recovery strategies to ensure governance, business, education, and social life continuity. This includes providing the necessary platforms and networks for essential activities such as teleworking, e-commerce, remote learning, telemedicine, and digital financial services while paying special attention to the needs of women and girls, persons with disabilities and other persons with specific needs, and children.
3. promoting sound, open, transparent, collaborative and future proof policy and regulatory decisions with a view to facilitating digital transformation in the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. We will implement innovative strategies and regulatory initiatives to bridge the widening **digital divide** and make high-quality **broadband connectivity** universal, cost-effective, and affordable while addressing trust, security and safety of infrastructure and services. As such, we will develop and implement regulatory frameworks to ensure infrastructure resiliency and protection of data. Besides, we will adopt effective plans to develop and enhance **digital capacities and skills** that are required in the online world, without which the digital divide will continue to widen.
4. fully exploiting the opportunities provided by **digital transformation** of various sectors of the economy by supporting the industry, academia and private sector to unleash new and emerging technologies. We will encourage innovations to foster sustainable development and address current and future challenges, such as poverty alleviation, job creation, gender inequality, and cybersecurity. In doing so, we will implement evidence-based decision making to measure and maximize the impact of digital transformation.
5. providing support to and cooperate with **developing countries, LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS** in addressing their constraints for accessing ICT-centric digital technologies and their integration into different sectors, such as government services, agriculture, education, health, finance, transport, etc.
6. promoting international **cooperation** among ITU Membership and development-oriented stakeholders for achieving sustainable development using ICT-centric digital technologies. We will enhance and encourage **cooperation and partnership** between developing countries and between developed and developing countries to facilitate technology and knowledge transfer with a view to promoting sustainable development and economic growth.

Accordingly, we, the delegates to the eighth World Telecommunication Development Conference, **declare our commitment** to the full and rapid implementation of **this Declaration**. We also pledge to spare no effort towards the expansion and use of digital infrastructures, applications, and services for building and establishing truly sustainable digital economies and societies.

The World Telecommunication Development Conference calls upon ITU membership as well as all development-oriented stakeholders, including those in the United Nations system, to contribute actively towards the successful implementation of **this Declaration**.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_