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| Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau |
| Organization of an ITU *Accessible World - ICT for ALL-* Global Summit  |
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| **Summary:**ITU-D is poised to lead the organisation of an "*Accessible World – ICT for ALL”* Global Summit, a major gathering of ITU Member States, policymakers, and stakeholders committed to advancing the global agenda for an inclusive digital world for ALL. Set for first half of the year 2026, and to be hosted by one of ITU Members attached to this goal, the Summit will be a pivotal event in ITU's mission to *connect the world*, championing not only equal but equitable participation for individuals of all ages, genders, abilities, educational backgrounds, and geographical locations in the digital society, economy, and environment. The ITU Accessible World – ICT for ALL Global Summit (hereafter “The Summit”) will focus on raising awareness, sharing knowledge, and promoting policies, strategies, projects, actions, and networking opportunities for strategic partnerships. It aims to enhance the availability, affordability, and accessibility of ICTs to ensure a digital world without barriers where no one is left behind.ITU’s distinct mandate in technology and recognised UN's leader in ICT/digital accessibility as underscored by the JIU Report 2018/6 and reinforced by specific resolutions including WTDC Resolution 58 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) and PP Resolution 175 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022), alongside thirty-seven other resolutions that require actions relevant to inclusiveness in accessing ICT products services and solutions, uniquely qualifies ITU to lead the charge toward universally inclusive and accessible world for all.**Action required:**TDAG is invited to note this document, provide guidance, and manifest interest for hosting this event in 2026. **References:**WTDC22 Resolution 58; PP22 Resolution 175 and Study Group 1 on Question 7 “Telecommunication/ICT accessibility to enable inclusive communication, especially for persons with disabilities” |

**Introduction and justification**

[ICT/Digital Accessibility](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Digital-Inclusion/Pages/ICT-digital-accessibility/default.aspx) is a key requirement towards achieving an inclusive digital world by ensuring that ICT products, services and application can be used by all people to communicate in the digital space, regardless of their age, gender, ability socio-economic background or geographical location.

As the UN agency leader in technology and accessibility, a role also emphasized at the 45th session of the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) in 2023, ITU is uniquely positioned to organize a landmark Global Summit on *Accessible World – ICT for ALL* as a pivotal event reinforcing both ITU and our ITU Members efforts in advancing the agenda of this key global topic.

The ITU *Accessible World – ICT for ALL* Global **Summit** will represent a major step forward to advance inclusive ICTs and set global benchmarks for ICT/digital accessibility to guarantee a barrier free digital world in which no one is left behind.

**Background and expertise**

The landmark realization around 2006 that SMART technology with embedded accessibility features from design to benefit everyone—was key in reconsidering the future of work approach for digital inclusion. This required a shift within the digital inclusion’ strategy towards promoting ICT/digital accessibility as a foundational – universal design within the digital space – influencing through its principles, requirements and standards the formulation and execution of digital inclusion policies and strategies at global and regional level.

**18 Years of Experience** The work of the ITU-D Study Group on inclusive communication, beginning in the early 2000s with Question 26/1 and now known as Question 7/1, has set pioneering standards, principles, and solutions to guarantee equal and equitable use of ICT products, services, and solutions. It has been recognized that embedding ICT accessibility within the design and deployment of technology is essential to enable its use by all individuals, especially those in vulnerable situations such as persons with disabilities.

Eighteen years later, the efforts of ITU Members in the Study Group on Q7/1 have unequivocally demonstrated the critical importance of ICT accessibility across various sectors, including education, labour, health, e-government services, entertainment, and beyond. Consequently, mainstreaming ICT accessibility has become essential to ensure that the journey of digital transformation is inclusive for everyone. To ensure inclusiveness of all people in the digital society ICT accessibility was also included in all regions as reflected in the WTDC regional initiatives.

Furthermore, [ITU-D work in ICT accessibility for digital inclusion](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Digital-Inclusion/Pages/ICT-digital-accessibility/default.aspx) stands out with its unique value proposition, offering over 75 tools and resources, including thematic reports, toolkits, online self-paced training courses, and video tutorials. Significantly, all ITU resources are provided free of charge, in multiple UN languages, and most of them are in digitally accessible formats, catering to the needs of individuals who are blind, deaf, or have other disabilities, to support its global implementation.

**10 Years of Experience in leading Regional Events** **“Accessible – ICT for ALL”** - Over the past decade, Accessible Americas was consolidated as a solid regional platform of digital inclusion, especially from the perspective of intersectionality, including all vulnerable groups in the digital transformation and inclusion regional effort. [Accessible Americas- ICT for ALL](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Americas/Pages/EVENTS/2023/AA-2023.aspx) is recognized by the ITU Members and involved stakeholders as *the Regional Knowledge Development Platform* that facilitates and supports the improvement of national policies and strategies in digital inclusion for all people without any discrimination and strengthen collaboration to advance inclusion in the Americas Region.

Similar efforts were further undertaken in the last 6 years by Europe region through [Accessible Europe – ICT for ALL](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Pages/Events/2023/1205-06%20-%20Accessible%20Europe/Accessible-Europe-23.aspx#:~:text=Accessible%20Europe%202023%20was%20an,about%20digital%20inclusion%20and%20accessibility.) (upon the European Accessibly Act and Directives adoption) followed by [Accessible Arab – ICT for ALL](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/ArabStates/Pages/Events/2023/AccessibleARB/Accessible-ARB2023.aspx). Efforts to promote ICT accessibility among ITU members have also been extended through a combination of online and in-person events and activities in Asia and the Pacific, Africa, and CIS Regions.

**Addressing Global Demands**: The ITU Accessible World- ICT for ALL Global Summit also aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals - Agenda 2030 targets, ageing populations global megatrend, and implementation of the overarching goal of digital inclusion and bridging all digital divides including those related to access, affordability and skills development insuring that no one will be left behind.

* As today’s one billion older **adults age over sixty will double to two billion in the next three decades**, it becomes evident that ageing in a digital world can turn the paradigm of vulnerable into valuable. ICTs, if built with the digital accessibility requirements and universal design can make a fundamental difference in creating accessible, inclusive and age friendly digital environments and communities.[[1]](#footnote-2)
* By 2050 nearly **2.5 billion people are projected to have some degree of hearing loss** and at least 700 million will require hearing rehabilitation. Over 1 billion young people are at risk of permanent, avoidable hearing loss due to unsafe listening practices.[[2]](#footnote-3)
* **Millions of jobs requiring advanced digital skills** will be created in the coming decade, but many countries are projecting a shortfall of skilled workers to fill these jobs. While young people are often considered “digital natives,” the reality is that the majority do not possess job-relevant digital skills. In particular, jobs requiring coding and other advanced ICT skills are going unfilled.[[3]](#footnote-4)
* **Closing the usage gap**: One in three individuals who could go online choose not to, due to prohibitive costs to afford connectivity price and appropriate device, and/or lack digital skills to be able use ICTs for socio-economic empowerment [[4]](#footnote-5)
* **Closing the age and gender digital gap**: Overall, young people have greater ICT skills than adults, and **while there is gender parity for basic and intermediate skills, gender imbalances still exist for advanced skills**. On a global scale, 69 per cent of men are using the Internet, compared with 63 per cent of women.

**The ITU Accessible World – ICT for ALL Global Summit also aligns with and respond to the evolving demands from Member States to addressing digital inclusivity**, from silos to a holistic and intersectional approach to include all people in their national strategies. This effort aims to achieve digital inclusion of all people including those in vulnerable situations such as: children, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, and people from rural and remote communities or Indigenous people. Over the past 20 years, there has been a rise in ITU resolutions that focus on digital inclusion requirements for specific target groups. To date, the ITU has thirty-seven (37) resolutions that have a component calling for digital inclusion interventions including specific resolutions that target inclusive communication for persons in vulnerable situations [[5]](#footnote-6).
ITU’s role as a leader in the field of technology and digital accessibility, as highlighted in the JIU Report 2018/6, uniquely positions it to spearhead global efforts towards creating universally inclusive and accessible ICTs to address inclusiveness for all people in the digital world.

**Summit Structure and Objectives**

**Event Organization:** Planned as a quadrennial event, the ITU Accessible World- ICT for ALL Global Summit will aim to also include high-level ministerial roundtables, expert panels, partnership-building sessions, impactful keynote speeches, and showcases of accessible ICT innovations.

**Summit Target Groups:** The Summit will focus on inclusive digital communication for all people (all end-users) including vulnerable groups such as youth, women, persons with disabilities, older persons, persons from rural/remote communities and Indigenous people.

**Participants and Audience:** The Summit will get together ITU membership, all involved stakeholders (industry, Academia, NGOs, DPOs, UN related) policy and decision makers from other Government entities form around the word under the invitation of their respective ITU Member States (as the subject is cross-sectoral).

**Integrated Outcomes and Impact Achievements**

**Unified Approach to Digital Inclusion**: The Summit will serve as a Platform to consolidate various efforts towards digital inclusivity, providing a cohesive framework for global action.

**Strategic Advisory and Implementation Tools:** Emphasizing proactive assistance to Member States, the Summit will offer comprehensive knowledge on the topic and raise awareness on existing practical tools and resources to foster effective implementation of digital inclusion policies and strategies to guarantee an inclusive digital transformation globally.

**Community-Centric Impact:** The Summit will focus on sharing challenges and good practices on projects and activities that emphasize the impact of ensuring inclusivity and technological accessibility within the community, aiming to maximize the benefits of empowerment through ICT for a diverse range of end-users.

**Sharing good practices:** The Summit will provide a Platform to interchange expertise, experience and good practices in ICT accessibility thus accelerating the implementation process in other regions and globally.

**Enhanced Global Partnerships:** By attracting a wide array of stakeholders, The Summit will aim to foster partnerships among various type of stakeholders as a critical for aspect in advancing digital inclusivity and opening opportunities for fundraising and partnership.

**Value proposition**

The "ITU Accessible World – ICT for All Global Summit" will fast-track the development of human-centred and universally designed ICTs supporting a responsible, inclusive, and sustainable digital transformation. This Summit will thus further the creation of inclusive digital societies, economies, and environments, ensuring comprehensive participation of all individuals in the digital age.

[ITU-D work in ICT accessibility for digital inclusion](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Digital-Inclusion/Pages/ICT-digital-accessibility/default.aspx) stands out with its unique value proposition, offering over 75 tools and resources, including thematic reports, toolkits, online self-paced training courses, and video tutorials. Significantly, all ITU resources are provided free of charge, in multiple UN languages, and most of them are in digitally accessible formats, catering to the needs of individuals who are blind, deaf, or have other disabilities, to support its global implementation.

The value of the ITU regional events under the banner "Accessible – ICT for All" over the past decade was formally recognized by its members and stakeholders. These events have played a pivotal role in creating regional platforms for advancing knowledge and leadership in accessibility, facilitating the exchange of ideas and best practices to make information and communication technologies accessible to everyone. Globally, there is no event that comprehensively covers the topic of digital accessibility, which is crucial for ensuring an inclusive digital transformation and an inclusive digital world for ALL.

The Summit will also significantly boost opportunities for sponsorships and partnerships centred on inclusivity, by fostering collaborations with major UN agencies such as WHO, ESCAP, ESCWA, and UNDESA and key national, regional, and global Disability Persons Organizations (DPOs). These partnerships have already led to numerous successful outcomes, including the development of impactful projects and initiatives, regional Accessible – ICT for ALL events, workshops, and the publication of critical tools and resources in accessibility. By actively engaging in these collaborations, ITU enhances its leadership role in the global digital inclusion landscape. This increased leadership not only elevates ITU's influence but also attracts additional sponsorship and partnership opportunities, ensuring the continued expansion of our efforts to make the digital world accessible to everyone. These strategic engagements are poised to produce even more significant results, driving forward our commitment to ensure that no one is left behind in the digital world.

**Foreseen Outcomes as Impact Achievements**

**Strengthening ITU’s Leadership in Digital Inclusion:** The Summit will reinforce ITU’s global influence in promoting ICT digital accessibility, as the universal design of technology, that will enable to ensure that no one is left behind in the digital age, aligning with the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Setting Global Benchmarks:** The outcomes of The Summit will serve as global benchmarks for ICT /digital accessibility requirements, principles and standards. These benchmarks will inspire countries to adopt inclusive digital transformation practices, aiming to make a digitally accessible world for all people without any type of discrimination.

**Tangible Benefits to Diverse Communities**: The Summit will catalyse the development of accessible ICT solutions that benefit all individuals, particularly those in vulnerable situations. By focusing on universally designed technologies, products, services and solutions, the event will help create a more inclusive digital environment for all end-users.

**Creating Collaborative Networks**: The Summit aims to establish innovative networks composed of key global, regional, and local partners from among all stakeholders involved will, enhance our collective efforts to advance the digital development and digital transformation agenda. This strategic partnership approach will not only strengthen our initiatives but also broaden the impact of human-centred technology, making the goal of building a digitally inclusive world a reality.

**Conclusion**

The Accessible World – ICT for ALL Global Summit is envisioned as a landmark event in ITU’s commitment to a digitally inclusive future for ALL people. By focusing on comprehensive and actionable outcomes, the Summit will significantly contribute to the advancement of global digital transformation and inclusiveness agenda. It will not only showcase ITU's leadership role but also set in motion a series of impactful initiatives, ensuring that technology is digitally accessible and beneficial for everyone, irrespective of age, gender, ability, or geographical location.

We strongly encourage ITU Members to consider hosting the first ever “***ITU Accessible World – ICT for ALL – Global Summit***”, a milestone Summit, aimed at bringing together the global community to champion the cause of ICT accessibility to ensure inclusive use of technology for ALL people socio-economic empowerment. Hosting, this event would underscore the Member's commitment to advance digital inclusion for global development. As we prepare for this transformative event, we look forward to partnering with the host to create a global platform to showcase leadership for a barrier-free digital world where no one is left behind.

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1. <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Digital-Inclusion/Pages/ageing-in-a-digital-world/default.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/deafness-and-hearing-loss> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <https://www.decentjobsforyouth.org/theme/digital-skills-for-youth> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. ITU Global Connectivity Report 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. **Eleven (11) WTDC-22 Resolutions**: 11, 17, 37, 46, 55, 58, 64, 67, 71, 76, 82 and **twenty-six (26) ITU-PP-22 Resolutions**:  30, 64, 66, 70, 71, 102, 130, 131, 133, 135, 136, 139, 140, 167, 175, 179, 184, 191, 197, 198 200, 204,205, 209, 214, 215. The topic is also reflected in **eleven (11) Regional Initiatives**:  AFR1, AMS2, AMS4, ARB1, ASP2, ASP3, ASP4, CIS1, CIS4, EUR3, EUR5. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)