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| **Council 2017 Geneva, 15-25 May 2017** |  |
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| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| World Telecommunication and Information Society Day | |

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| Summary  The purpose of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) is to help raise awareness of the possibilities that the use of the Internet and other information and communication technologies (ICTs) can bring to societies and economies, as well as of ways to bridge the digital divide. WTISD marks the anniversary of the signature of the first International Telegraph Convention and the creation of the International Telecommunication Union on 17 May 1865.  Action required  The Council is requested **to note** the celebration of WTISD-17 on the theme **“Big Data for Big Impact,”** which was approved by Council 2016.  The Council is also requested to **approve** the theme “***Enabling the positive use of Artificial Intelligence for all”*** for WTISD-2018. |

# 1. Background

1.1 *World Telecommunication Day* has been celebrated annually on 17 May **since 1969**, marking the date of the founding of ITU and the signing of the first International Telegraph Convention in 1865. It was formally instituted by the Plenipotentiary Conference in Malaga‑Torremolinos in 1973. In recognition of ITU as the lead United Nations agency for ICTs, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis, November 2005, called on the United Nations General Assembly to proclaim 17 May as World Information Society Day ([see paragraph 121 of the Tunis Agenda](http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/tunis/off/6rev1.html)).

1.2 On 27 March 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 60/252, proclaiming 17 May as *World Information Society Day* to focus global attention annually on bringing the enormous benefits of the digital revolution in ICTs to the world’s inhabitants.

1.3 The ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in November 2006 welcomed the General Assembly’s decision and amended Resolution 68 to invite the Council to adopt a specific theme for each *World Telecommunication and Information Society Day*.

**2. World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2017**

2.1 WTISD-17 marks the 152nd anniversary of ITU, highlighting the theme “Big Data for Big Impact,” in line with ITU Plenipotentiary Resolution 68 (Rev. Guadalajara, 2010) and as decided by Council 2016.

2.2 Big Data is an extremely important technology development. Big Data is an umbrella term for the large amounts of digital data continually generated from various devices being used by the global population (UN Global Pulse, June 2013), often including emerging technological capabilities in solving complex tasks.

2.3 Big Data for development is about turning imperfect, complex, often unstructured data into actionable information in development context. The insight brought on by advanced analysis can strongly compliment the evidence-based nature of decision-making that can be leveraged at the national, regional and international level to drive success towards attaining all 17 of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030.

2.4 This theme for WTISD-17 aims to identify opportunities and challenges to ensure that Big Data become a key tool in tackling the challenges of implementing the SDGs and measuring impact.

2.5 The theme for WTISD-17 is in line with ITU’s work highlighting the technological developments that have facilitated the emergence of big data, developing standards related to big data, and identifying sources and uses of big data, including use of big data techniques for development and monitoring the information society.

2.6 Activities undertaken by the ITU membership will contribute towards building momentum to embrace big data and leverage insights to identify new opportunities to creatively address sustainable development challenges.

2.7 The Secretary-General issued a Call for Action in order to:

• CREATE and strengthen a national data ecosystem for sustainable development, where data is being generated, captured, shared and analyzed in innovative ways, and increase the value of data and analytics through national policies in a development context.

• ENCOURAGE cross-sector, cross-agency, cross-border data collaboration, and develop unified standards for emerging data sources and data interoperability by considering rapidly changing technologies and data landscape

• ESTABLISH a data-driven decision making, service delivery, and operational efficiency culture

• DEVELOP national policies and data strategies to promote open data and big data analytics, services and markets, consistent with public interest and fostering common goods, and provide an unambiguous regulatory framework for enhancing data transparency and utility.

• STRENGTHEN international efforts to FOSTER privacy, security, public trust and the ethical use of data involving a variety of stakeholders.

• SUPPORT and scale up R&D to explore and understand possibilities and opportunities of big data and improve the national landscape for data education and training to respond to the increasing demand for both deep analytical talent and capacity for the broader areas.

• SUPPORT international effort on collaborative activities across all sectors and nations to respond to and measure any possible crisis, and foster regional, cross-sector collaboration and multinational projects to foster innovation using big data.

# 3. The theme for World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2018

* 1. WTISD-18 will be important for ITU, due to the 2018 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (PP-18), which will take place from 29 October to 16 November 2018 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE). WTISD-18 will represent a unique opportunity to commemorate ITU’s contribution to the advancement of the information society and reflect on some of the upcoming challenges linked to the accelerated use of ICTs in all aspects of life.

3.2 In recent years there has been significant progress in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) technology, made possible by tremendous advances in contributing fields, such as big data, machine learning, computing power, storage capacity and cloud computing, among others. AI-based technologies are already emerging as a key component of proactive tools and applications being used to help people lead better lives by improving healthcare, education, finance, agriculture, transportation, and a wide range of citizen services.

3.3 In this context, the proposed theme for WTISD-18 is “***Enabling the positive use of Artificial Intelligence for all***”. The theme will allow ITU Membership to focus on the opportunities that the use of AI will provide to ICT sector, looking at how the use of AI could help to improve public services and accelerate the achievement of the SDGs by 2030, as well as reflect upon how to prevent potential negative impacts of the use of AI technology, such as for example, the considerable concerns about the impact of AI on employment.

3.4 This proposed theme for WTISD-18 is in line with ITU’s mandate to enhance the identification and analysis of emerging trends in the telecommunication and ICT environment, as defined by Resolution 71 (Rev. Busan 2014).

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