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| **Council Working Group on the World Summit on the Information Society**  **31st meeting – Geneva, 19-20 September 2017** |  |
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**World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2017/ 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 telecommunications and information and communication technologies (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 The theme for WTISD-17, “Big Data for Big Impact,” focused on the power of Big Data for development and aimed to explore how to turn imperfect, complex, often unstructured data into actionable information in a development context. The insight brought on by advanced analysis can strongly complement the evidence-based nature of decision-making that can be leveraged at national, regional and international levels to drive success towards attaining all 17 of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030.

2.2 A debate was held at ITU on 17 May 2017 which brought together participants from CERN, GSMA, Swisscom and UNICRI who discussed all aspects of the impact of Big Data in front of an audience of Council delegates. This debate was very lively and included a Question and Answer session with the audience.

# 3. World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2018 3.1 WTISD-18 will mark the 153rd anniversary of ITU, highlighting the theme: “Enabling the positive use of Artificial Intelligence for All”, in line with ITU Plenipotentiary Resolution 68 (Rev. Guadalajara, 2010) and as decided by Council 2016.

3.2 Artificial Intelligence (AI) has enormous potential to assist global efforts to address challenges as great as poverty, hunger, health, education, equality and the protection of our environment. Inclusive global dialogue will be fundamental in building the common understandings necessary to guide AI innovation towards the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

3.3 AI is certain to influence many areas of ITU’s technical work, with examples found in data management, network orchestration, video coding, intelligent transport systems, and Internet of Things and smart cities.