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| **Council 2018 Geneva, 17-27 April 2018** |  |
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| **Agenda item: PL 2.3** | **Document C18/17-E** |
| **11 January 2018** |
| **Original: English** |
| 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-18 on the theme **“AI for Good”** which was approved by Council 2016.  The Council is also requested to **approve** the theme “***Bridging the standardization gap”*** for WTISD-2019.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  References  Documents [C17/17](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-C-0017/en), [C17/119](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-C-0119/en). |

# 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 2018**

2.1 WTISD-18 marks the 153rd anniversary of ITU, highlighting the theme “AI for Good,” in line with ITU Plenipotentiary Resolution 68 (Rev. Guadalajara, 2010) and as decided by Council 2017.

2.2 This theme for WTISD-18 aims to identify opportunities and challenges to ensure that artificial intelligence (AI) becomes a key tool in tackling the challenges of implementing the SDGs and measuring impact.

2.3 In recent years, there has been significant progress in 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.

2.4 The theme will allow ITU Membership to focus on the opportunities that the use of AI will provide to the ICT sector, looking at how the use of AI could help to improve public services and accelerate the achievement of the SDGs by 2030.

# 3. The theme for World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2019

* 1. The following theme for WTISD-19 was suggested at Council 2017: “Sustainable Development Goals to Bridge the Standardization Gap. The theme, if reconfirmed by Council in 2018, could also simply be called “Bridging the Standardization Gap,” so as to take a fresh look at ITU’s long-standing ‘BSG’ initiatives.
  2. The theme would allow ITU Membership to focus on the work that the Union has done and will continue to do to ensure that developing countries are increasing their ability to contribute to, and benefit from, the important ICT standardization work and thereby contribution to achieving the sustainable development goals. It would allow Membership to highlight the benefits of globally harmonized standards – and the risks associated if standardization work is not being driven in a more inclusive way.

3.3 This proposed theme for WTISD-19 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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