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**World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2019 and 2020**

1. **Background**
	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)).
	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.
	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*.
	4. WTISD-19 marked the 50th anniversary of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day which has been celebrated annually since 1969.
2. **World** Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2019
	1. The theme for WTISD-19 was *“Bridging the Standardization Gap”.* Bridging the Standardization Gap is a fundamental part of ITU's mission to connect the world. Bridging the Standardization Gap is also a programme run by ITU to promote the increased participation of developing countries in ITU’s process, with the focus of empowering local experts in the standardization process at the national, regional, international levels and promoting the implementation of international standards in developing countries.
	2. The ceremony began with a message from the U.N. Secretary-General Mr. António Guterres delivered by ITU Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Malcolm Johnson, and was followed by a keynote speech from ITU Secretary-General, Mr. Houlin Zhao.
	3. A panel discussion under the theme “*Digital transformation enabled by inclusive international standards*” was held on this day, and brought together five distinguished panelists: the Secretary-General of International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Deputy Director-General of the Universal Postal Union (UPU), the Chief Scientist and the Chief Information Officer of the World Health Organization (WHO).
	4. The panelists discussed the various dimensions of the digital economy and digital transformation in front of an audience of Ambassadors and Diplomats. The discussion shed light on how inclusive international standards help countries use technology to improve lives. This debate was very lively and highlighted the importance of coordination, and collective action, to ensure for inclusive and effective standards capable to address the challenges brought by new digital technologies such as Artificial Intelligence.
	5. The celebrations concluded with the WTISD certificate award ceremony recognizing the top contributors to ITU standards and Bridging the Standardization Gap. Six laureates were awarded under the five categories of Bridging the Standardization Gap Programme: Awareness, Know-how, Community, Engagement, and Partnering.
	6. To find out more about Bridging the Standardization Gap initiative, please visit the homepage <https://www.itu.int/go/bridging>, with information on how to take part in the programme. For more information on WTISD-19 event, please visit <https://itu.int/go/wtisd2019> with key messages, calls to action, campaign visuals, and the list of worldwide WTISD Initiatives.
3. **World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2020**
	1. The year 2020 has been identified as a key milestone for the future ICT development and deployment, especially since the ‘Connect 2020 Agenda for Global Telecommunication/ICT Development’ was first adopted at the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in 2014, Busan, Republic of Korea. WTISD-20 will represent a unique opportunity for ITU membership to commemorate ICT’s contribution to the advancement of the Information Society, specifically focusing on technological advances in the last 10 years.
	2. The theme for WTISD-20 approved by the 2019 Session of Council is “Connect 2030: ICTs for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”. The theme will allow ITU membership to reflect on the ICT advances for transition to smart and sustainable development. In particular, it will focus on specific ICT-enabled solutions and emerging trends for fostering economic, environmental and social sustainability, contributing to the five strategic goals of Connect 2030 Agenda: Growth, Inclusiveness, Sustainability, Innovation and Partnership. The theme will allow ITU membership to celebrate the significant progress achieved towards the Connect 2020 targets but also to highlight the emerging needs and challenges while formulating their national and regional strategies to accelerate the ambitious targets for 2030.
	3. The theme for WTISD-20 is also in line with Resolution 200 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) and Resolution 71 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), which defines the Connect 2030 Agenda for telecommunications/ICTs, fully aligned with the strategic plan of the Union (2020-2023) and the global efforts to ‘Connect the unconnected’.
	4. During the 2019 Session of Council, some councillors suggested that the designation “World Telecommunication and Information Society Day” might be shortened to make easier for the general public to understand. The ITU secretariat would welcome any further suggestions and guidance provided by membership.
	5. The ITU secretariat is currently developing a more detailed plan of activities for the WTISD-20 celebrations, to be shortly communicated with ITU membership.