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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-20 on the theme **“Connect 2030: ICTs for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”** which was approved by Council 2019.  The Council is also requested to **approve** the theme **“*Trust in the Era of Digital Transformation”*** for WTISD-21.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  References  UNGA Resolution [60/252](https://www.itu.int/en/wtisd/Pages/res60-252.aspx); Resolutions [68](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-068-E.pdf), [71](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-071-E.pdf), [130](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-130-E.pdf), [200](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-200-E.pdf) of the Plenipotentiary Conference; Council documents [C19/17](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-C-0017/en) |

# 1. Background

1.1 *World Telecommunication Day* has been celebrated annually on 17 May **since 1969**, marking the date of the signing of the first International Telegraph Convention in and the founding of ITU 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 2020**

2.1 This year, the Union and partners will address the Connect 2030 Agenda and the contribution of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to deliver the Global Goals by 2030.

2.2 WTISD-20’s theme, **“Connect 2030: ICTs for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”** will reinforce ITU’s commitment to connect everyone, everywhere, while showing how ICTs can contribute to accelerating the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2.3 Since the 2030 Agenda was launched in 2015, ITU, as the UN specialized agency for ICTs, has experienced how digital technologies are influencing all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from vision to action.

2.4 ITU Member States adopted the Connect 2030 Agenda for Global Telecommunication/ICT Development, as per Resolution 200 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, affirming a shared global vision where telecommunications/ICTs enable and accelerate social, economic, and environmentally sustainable growth and development for everyone, everywhere.

2.5 Given the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and as part of the Decade of Action, the theme of this year’s WTISD should focus on and contribute to:

* **Enhancing collaboration and cooperation** among governments, businesses, UN agencies, civil society, and others to advance the role of ICTs in the global response to COVID-19.
* **Strengthening the role of ICTs** in accelerating progress towards the SDGs.
* **Raising awareness of the importance of connectivity**, as well as specific ICT-enabled solutions and emerging trends for fostering economic, environmental, and social sustainability.
* **Increasing the use of ICTs**,including by tacklingdemand-side barriers such as low affordability and a lack of digital skills.
* **Reducing the digital divide** between and within countries, including the digital gender divide.
* **Calling on Sector Members (incl. SMEs) and Academia** to embrace the Connect 2030 Agenda and reflect some of its targets into their own objectives.

2.6. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, WTISD-20 event will take place virtually on 18 May. The event will bring together ITU partners to showcase how ICTs can accelerate the achievement of the SDGs, as well as to share how ICTs are used to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. By presenting how they use the technology on the ground, different stakeholders will show how they help ensure business continuity during this period, while highlighting the potential of ICTs as enablers of development.

2.7 The event will address the importance of enhancing collaboration and cooperation across countries and sectors. It will strengthen the Decade of Action called by the UN Secretary-General, most notably by raising awareness of the importance of ICTs.

**3. The theme for World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2021**

3.1 In our joint effort to connect everybody, everywhere and anytime, we can see that despite Internet usage keeps growing, barriers still lie ahead. Data from 2019 shows that while 93 per cent of the world’s population lives within reach of a mobile broadband (or Internet) service, just over 53 per cent actually uses the Internet.

3.2 One of the most important factors identified as hindering people from being online, in addition to access, affordability and skills, is trust in the use of ICTs.

3.3 The proposed theme for WTISD-21 is **“Trust in the Era of Digital Transformation”**.

3.4 The proposed theme will allow ITU membership to raise awareness on the importance of trust in a world where everything is becoming digital. In this digital age, where ICTs affect almost all forms of social and economic activities, when delivering the promise of ICTs as tools to improve people’s lives, the risks that technologies can bring should also be considered as crucial.

3.5 ICTs are growing and developing so fast, bringing together new threats and vulnerabilities of infrastructures, networks and devices that also demand new and innovative approaches to address the challenge of trust in the use of ICTs.

3.6 The expansion and development of access to ICTs, underpinned by trust, is also recognized as essential for accelerating progress on all the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

3.7 The UN has declared 2021 the International Year of Peace and Trust, with the aim of mobilizing the efforts of the international community to promote peace and trust among nations based on, inter alia, political dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation, in order to build sustainable peace, solidarity and harmony.

3.8 The COVID-19 pandemic plunged the world into an unprecedented crisis with billions confined to their homes worldwide, now relying on teleworking and ICTs for continued access to education, healthcare, and essential goods and services, highlighting the fundamental importance of ICTs to the economy and society.

3.9 In this scenario, where international collaboration and partnership are essential, ITU serves as a platform for global dialogue and capacity building, as well as for setting security-related international standards, helping countries define cybersecurity strategies and establish computer incident response teams (CIRTs), and protecting children online.

3.9 This proposed theme for WTISD-21 will be in line with Resolution 71 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) which defines the strategic plan of the Union (2020-2023) and the Connect 2030 Agenda, as well as WSIS Action Line 5: Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs.

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