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| **Council 2021 Virtual consultation of councillors, 8-18 June 2021** |  |
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| **Agenda item: PL 2.2** | **Document C21/17-E** |
| **23 March 2021** |
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| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SOCIETY DAY | |

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| Summary  The purpose of the 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 2021 on the theme “Accelerating digital transformation in challenging times” which was approved by correspondence after the VCC-2 in 2020.  The Council is also requested **to approve** the theme **“Digital technologies for Older Persons and Healthy Ageing”** for WTISD 2022.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  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), [C20/17](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-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 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 2021**

2.1 This year, the Union and partners continue to celebrate the Connect 2030 Agenda and the contribution of ICTs to deliver the Global Goals by 2030.

2.2 WTISD 2021’s theme, **“Accelerating digital transformation in challenging times”** aims to emphasis the critical role of ICTs in the resiliency of societies, by showing how ITU membership stepped up and engaged in activities that have proven essential in saving lives and sustaining economies.

2.3 The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the urgency of accelerating digital transformation and advancing the goals and targets of the Connect 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind, no one offline.

2.4 For this, ITU membership was encouraged to continue leveraging telecommunications/ICTs by developing digital policies and strategies to adapt and respond timely and effectively to new challenges that may occur; and to report national progress with special focus on the targets that particularly contribute to digital transformation in the framework of the Connect 2030 Agenda (Targets 1.4, 1.7, 3.1, 3.5, 4.1, 5.1).

2.5 On 17 May, and in the framework of the World Summit on the Information Society Forum 2021 (WSIS), WTISD will address the importance of enhancing collaboration and cooperation across countries and sectors and bring together ITU Members and partners to showcase how governments, companies and academia can accelerate digital transformation through telecommunication/ICT in and for future challenging times.

2.6 By integrating WTISD into WSIS Forum 2021, many more stakeholders can be reached and WSIS-related events can join and share with ITU their expertise, guidelines, challenges, lessons learned, success stories, case studies, good practices, solutions, publications, and policies put in place to better meet future challenging times.

2.7 All information related to WTISD 2021 can be found in the dedicated website [www.itu.int/en/wtisd](http://www.itu.int/en/wtisd) (available in the six UN official languages).

**3. The theme for World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2022**

3.1 The ageing of the global population will be the defining demographic trend of the 21st century—yet our societies struggle to see the opportunities that this trend can unfold.

3.2 Telecommunications and information and communication technologies (ICTs) have a role to play in achieving healthier ageing, but also in helping people build smarter cities, combat age-based discrimination at the workplace, ensure financial inclusion of older persons, and support millions of caregivers across the world.

3.3 The proposed theme for WTISD 2022 is **“Digital technologies for Older Persons and Healthy Ageing”**.

3.4 United Nations address this theme in the UN Secretary-General’s Report “Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing” A/75/216: Highlighting the importance of older persons as a cross-cutting topic; in 2020 the World Summit on the Information Society Forum (WSIS Forum 2020), for the first time, dedicated a special track to older persons and ICT, that was welcomed by all stakeholders; and in 2021, along with the special track, Hackathon and a special WSIS Prize have been introduced to promote the topic of Healthy Ageing and ICTs for Older Persons.

3.5 WTISD 2022 will allow ITU membership, partners and other stakeholders to raise awareness about the important role of telecommunications/ICTs in supporting people to stay healthy, connected and independent, physically, emotionally and financially – to a life of healthy ageing - and as critical for the sustainability of economic and health systems.

3.6 The proposed theme for WTISD 2022 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, Goal 2: Inclusiveness (Targets 2.9, 2.10), as well as with WSIS Action Linea (C1, C3, C6, C8), the ICT and Older Person’s Special Track, and the Sustainable Development Goals (3, 10, 11, 16, 17).