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| **Physical open consultation of the Council Working Group on international Internet-related public policy issues  Virtual meeting, 25 January 2021** |  |
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|  | **Document OPCWGINT8/2** |
|  | **22 December 2020** |
|  | **English only** |
| Compilation of responses to the Online Open Consultation | |
| (February 2020 - December 2020) | |

Following the instructions of [Council Resolution 1336 (Mod. 2019)](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-C-0140/en), the 14th session of the Council Working Group on international Internet-related public policy issues (CWG-Internet) decided on 6 February 2020 to launch an open consultation (online and physical) in February 2020 on the following topic agreed at the 13th session of the CWG-Internet:

**“Expanding Internet Connectivity**

1. What are the challenges and opportunities for expanding Internet connectivity, particularly to remote and under-served areas? What are the roles of governments and non-government actors in overcoming these challenges?
2. Are there particular challenges facing land-locked countries in securing affordable Internet access? What can be done to overcome these challenges?
3. How can small/community/non-profit operators help in promoting the increase of Internet connectivity?”

Due to COVID-19, the deadline for responses to this Online Open Consultation was extended from September 2020 to 15 December 2020. A compilation of the responses received is set out below.

*NOTE: Please note that due to the different formats used by the online respondents:*

* *Inputs to the “Comment box” of the online form - serving either as sole contribution, summary or comment - have been copied and pasted;*
* *When available, indicated summaries have been copied and pasted;*
* *Where relevant, summaries sent through email have been copied and pasted;*
* *Unless a summary is submitted, documents of up to 1000 words have been copied and pasted, as well as hyperlinked. Longer documents have been hyperlinked only;*
* *Footnotes found in the submitted documents were not included in the present document.*

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|  | Date | Submitter  (Contributions hyperlinked) | Response |
|  | May 22, 2020 | [Jun Kyun Choi, Professor](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=3) | **Text provided in comment box:**  I propose to find the cheapest way to provide network connectivity among peoples, system, and devices. (no Internet connectivity --> network connectivity) - do not consider the existing regulation on frequency allocation and telecommunication business (no rule nor guideline of frequency regulation) - avoid the patent problems and barriers of network connectivity - find out optimal harmony between optical (wireline) and wireless solutions, especially for cheapest wireless solutions if any frequency spectrum is allowed. Second, I propose to find the Cheapest Way to share open data in the world. - all the useful data for public and global should be open - Open data should be declared by ITU (All the public organization and governments should be needed to support the principle of open data. Nobody try to regulate and filter the open data. Nobody try to make a business. Only the supporting tool to open the data is allowed by rules.) - All public organizations are recommended to open open data (declared by ITU) if they have. - ITU has some responsibility to manage open data framework and protect open data ecosystem in the world. |
|  | May 26, 2020 | [Rhizomatica](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=4) | **Text provided in comment box:**  Based on "Handbook Frequency-adaptive communication systems and networks in the MF/HF bands", by ITU Radiocommunication Bureau, and on modern open standards for HF radio, especially US MIL-STD-188-110D, we want to propose a wider bandwidth allocation for community and indigenous communities which rely only on HF radio for communication. A light licensing, without bureocracy is desired. US-STD-MIL 188-110-D specify bandwidths ranging from 3kHz up to 48kHz. We want to recommend that block allocations should be allowed for civilian use of HF, including licenses allowing access to blocks in different bands, eg, 30m and 60m bands together, for ALE operation (Automatic Link Establishment). Please refer to our project of connecting communities using HF links at: www.rhizomatica.org/hermes/ |
|  | May 29, 2020 | [Amali De Silva-Mitchell](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=5) | **Text provided in comment box:**  1. What are the challenges and opportunities for expanding Internet connectivity, particularly to remote and under-served areas? What are the roles of governments and non-government actors in overcoming these challenges? Network connectivity has always been the rate determining step for IT access in rural areas over the past 25 years, in all countries, due to the high costs of the infra-structure. The move to wireless technologies have speeded up the reach of affordable access through the use of mobile technologies. Investment in remote areas is critical for equitable access and sustainable development activities. In my opinion the development of rural local area networks (LAN) is a first step to then connecting wider. With the local network citizens can develop their technical skills to manage a network themselves and develop content and services to support the local community without waiting for costly broadband for instance to reach their locality. Government and non-profits can support with funding, access to skilled experts, and providing content in a form that can be used in ready to go formats and can even be accessed through telephone dial-up connectivity. Governments should ensure that all critical content can be accessed via dial-up technologies until such time sophisticated connectivity is available. Government can also promote private sector investment in rural areas.  2. Are there particular challenges facing land-locked countries in securing affordable Internet access? What can  be done to overcome these challenges?  3. How can small/community/non-profit operators help in promoting the increase of Internet connectivity? Non-profits can be of tremendous support for enabling affordable and inclusive access, as services can be implemented at an effective price point and designed, developed and delivered with local content. A diverse group of non-profits can provide a spectrum of services at different cost points and levels of access. Specialists for the disabled, elderly etc. can focus on providing optimal services for these groups. Non profits working as a business cluster could perhaps eliminate administrative costs while enabling a high-level of specialization. Non-profit ISPs are in reality a prototype or start-up for large service providers who then connect to them in to the future when the profitable margins present, due to the active take up of technology by the rural population. However, where rural populations are decreasing, a commitment is required to support these communities to achieve affordable equal access as more and more services are provided through the use of technologies. This is the fair process, that can even become soon, a human right!  Amali De Silva – Mitchell. Former President Vancouver Community Network Non-Profit ISP. Currently participating with IGF DCs and Eurodig. |
|  | July 17, 2020 | [UNCTAD](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=6) | **Text provided in comment box:**  ​ While there has been rapid progress in accessing the internet since WSIS, there remain manifold divides from the perspectives of cost, gender, quality of infrastructure and the overall access gap between developed and developing countries. Here, governments and non-government actors have multiple roles to play such as in the expansion of ICT infrastructure, developing skills and raising awareness on the benefits of being connected to the Internet, as well as creating an enabling environment including robust policy framework, legal framework, and the availability of funding. |
|  | July 28, 2020 | [United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN ECLAC)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=7) | **Contribution (no summary provided)**  Digital connectivity for everyone  "Without connectivity there is NO development", this should be considered the central message for the world. We are living in a period of structural changes that urgently call to create and develop new mechanisms of cooperation and development aid. And universal access to the Internet is a key part of this transformation. The #BuildBackBetter emerges as an urgent call from the community to rebuild and move towards a more inclusive and sustainable development system, and this is where the imperative need for the use and massification of digital technology arises, and where without connectivity it is impossible to resume the route to human-social, environmental and economic development. The pandemic caused by Covid-19 has exposed, in addition to the enormous connectivity gaps at a global level, that the Internet is a "vital" tool to save lives and to sustain the innumerable digital services that contribute to development in key areas such as education, employment, health and recently financial inclusion for the purposes of transfers to the high-risk population. We are at a point of no return to the conventional model and it is therefore the responsibility of the state, society and the private sector to contribute to this new development model based largely on digital technology and Internet access.  Challenges and how to achieve it  First, it is necessary and urgent that governments understand the vital importance of digital connectivity as a development tool. They must include it in their plans and programs from two points of view, the first how to modernize the state apparatus and the second to improve and make more effective the public services they offer to society. On the other hand, they must include within the budget short-term investments in digital infrastructure and strengthen alliances with the private sector.  From a global level, the UN considers and calls for internet access to be considered a global public good. Although this is correct, and given the innumerable arguments of the benefits it brings for development, it poses a greater challenge and is to bring it to a framework of rights and justice. This must be addressed by the 2030 development agenda as an opportunity for the re-construction of a more inclusive development model sustained under a legal and universal justice framework. Under this point it is important to identify networks and communities that work for the defense and right to access the Internet such as www.accessnow.org.  To move forward, a mapping of the critical points of NO connectivity must be made and an order of priority must be defined to connect. It is in this part where the capacity of the public and private actors that offer connectivity infrastructure and that operate as local internet service providers must be identified and evaluated. At this point there are 2 mechanisms that can serve as a channel to provide infrastructure services, one is public-private partnerships. Partnerships with the private sector are key in developing or underdeveloped countries since governments currently have very little fiscal margin, due to the increase in debt due to the pandemic. Another mechanism is corporate social responsibility. For this, the UN must continue to integrate the participation of the private sector as a key actor in the advancement and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals to the 2030 agenda.  A call to solidarity  Another of the effects of the Pandemic, which it has exposed, is that a large part of developing and underdeveloped countries do not have the capacity to expand connectivity. Given this situation and given that within the framework of the SDGs the private sector is increasingly playing a leading role, it is necessary to go to this sector to advance in "leaving no one behind" and even less so "disconnected". It is here that the UN must act urgently and strategically to identify and work with the actors that can contribute to this objective. In this context, we could think strategically and go to technological innovation companies, such as the recent launch of SpaceX (Elon Musk's company) and its Starlink satellites to create a satellite internet network, can be and be considered strategic partners to comply with this objective with scope of human development. For the private sector it is an opportunity to contribute to global development and be recognized by the UN as "Champions" of development. This alliance can be of the win-win type, since the Companies gain prestige for being promoters of development and the UN as the main articulator and defender of digital rights. |
|  | July 28, 2020 | [Alliance for Affordable Internet](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=8) | **Summary provided in the Contribution:**  ​ With [only half of the world’s population](https://news.itu.int/itu-statistics-leaving-no-one-offline/) connected to the internet today it is clear that we will not achieve the [SDG goal 9.c](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg9) *to* *significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020.* We, at the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI), believe that there are opportunities and challenges with expanding internet connectivity and achieving universal, affordable access by 2030. One of the main challenges is overcoming rural connectivity, and therefore, through developing and implementing rural/remote broadband policies, governments must create enabling environments to bridge the growing digital divide and prioritize policies and regulations that allow rural connectivity to expand. The following is our responses to the three main questions posed by the CWG-Internet. |
|  | August 13, 2020 | [GSMA](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=9) | **Summary provided in the Contribution:**  Over the past five years, mobile operators invested more than US$ 870 billion in CAPEX, reducing the number of individuals living outside mobile broadband coverage by 60% (900 million people). As a result, 93% of the global population is now covered by infrastructure providing access to the internet, which is 90% in low- and middle-income countries. At the same time, the industry continues to upgrade its infrastructure for improved user experiences. 4G has become the dominant mobile technology, overtaking 3G in 2019 and is expected to account for 60% of all connections by 2023. These improvements in network infrastructure facilitate the rapid growth of global mobile data usage, which is set to increase almost fourfold, from 7.5GB per subscriber per month to 28GB in 2025. Sub Saharan Africa is expected to see the largest growth, from 0.8GB to 6.8GB in 2025, spurred by increased smartphone adoption and availability of affordable services.  These increased levels of connectivity have a positive impact on socio-economic development and individual well-being. Since 2015, mobile connectivity has driven an increase in global GDP of US$ 360 billion (4% of overall growth) and the industry increased global employment by around 5 million. In 2019, the mobile ecosystem supported around 30 million jobs. Accelerated mobile internet use is also helping to advance progress towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.  In our response, we identify the best way for policy makers to expand the reach of commercially sustainable networks is by creating an enabling environment - including pro-investment and proinnovation policies and regulations that reduce the costs and uncertainty around spectrum assignment, remove obstacles to network deployment and promote best practices on tax policy. In our response, we focus not only on policy recommendations to expand coverage but also on policy recommendations to stimulate demand, as 3.4 billion people with access to mobile broadband have not adopted the internet yet. Accelerating internet adoption will not only include these individuals in an increasingly digital society, but will also help mobile operators to continue to invest more and better infrastructure, especially in rural areas.  Policy recommendations on expanding coverage:  1. Balanced spectrum policy to advance coverage  2. Avoid license terms and conditions that discourage network expansion  3. Reduce mobile-specific taxes and fees that impede rollouts and harm internet affordability  4. Simplify and streamline local planning and approval processes  5. Infrastructure sharing on a voluntary basis  6. Government intervention should only be considered once all other regulatory measures are exhausted  Policy recommendations on increasing demand:  1. Reduce mobile-specific taxes and fees on devices and services  2. Encourage the development of local ecosystems of digital products, apps and services that meet the needs, preferences and capabilities of unconnected people  3. Invest in digital literacy and skills  4. Support and conduct research on the threats, as well as cultural or social norms, that prevent citizens from accessing and using the internet in different social and cultural contexts  5. Facilitate access to handsets, electricity, agents and formal IDs, in particular, for the poorest and most disadvantaged people, including those with disabilities and women |
|  | August 19, 2020 | [Article 19](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=10) | **Text provided in comment box:**  The economic challenges to the expansion of Internet connectivity are mostly related to the higher cost of infrastructural expansion and unaffordability for unconnected and underserved communities. The cost of deployment for large telecom operators is higher in rural and remote areas as compared to urban areas, due to geographic and topographic limitations. To compensate for these investments, large telecom operators subject end-users to higher service costs. As rural and remote communities tend to be poor, the resulting unaffordability, coupled with a relatively small customer base, results in low overall demand for connectivity services. Together with the limitations of access to spectrum, small/community/non-profit operators often face high licensing fees and complex authorization and registration bureaucracies that are designed for the regulation of large telecom operators. Besides the listed challenges, there are also opportunities in expanding Internet connectivity, such as market expansion for Internet service providers to unconnected and underserved areas, which are mostly located in the Global South, the use of unlicensed and unused spectrum, representing an affordable alternative to provide broadband Internet to lower-income communities, and the Universal Access Service Funds, keeping in mind that to be effective, the access and use of the funds must be transparent, include support for broadband deployment, and recognize small/community/non-profit operators. Public policies developed by governments fundamentally impact the availability of universal, affordable, sustainable, and quality broadband connectivity. Governments can effectively tackle the challenges by ensuring coherence in public sector policy development through strong collaboration and coordination between the various public bodies involved in connectivity expansion, at all levels of governance. Governments have the responsibility to create more equitable opportunity models that promote access to spectrum and infrastructure sharing for actors with limited resources through regulatory reforms with a special focus on underserved and unconnected areas. There are a variety of alternative regulatory approaches regarding access to spectrum, such as simplified, secondary use, and social licenses. Regulatory provisions for mandating access and infrastructure sharing can counter market concentration, minimize unnecessary resource redundancies, and allow for the reallocation of costs that would be used for infrastructure deployment to investments in service quality improvements. Large telecom operators should collaborate with local connectivity initiatives to find mutually beneficial agreements for connectivity expansion. Small/community/non-profit operators are critical stakeholders that can provide last-mile connectivity in rural and remote areas, including by increasing digital literacy and providing content in local languages. They offer services that complement those provided by large telecom operators, finding creative ways to structure and finance their businesses in areas that are considered unprofitable by large telecom operators and boosting the local economy in a sustainable way. They can also help large telecom operators by creating new demand for mobile communications. Since they are local operators, they also help increase digital literacy locally and to provide content in the local language, which is key to guarantee actual adoption and true connectivity. |
|  | September 29, 2020 | [IBEBrasil](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=11) | **Text provided in comment box:**  ​The internet access need to be a human right in fact, cause the digital transformation shows us how the negative impact of the lack of this right can cause damage in a social, economical, educational, cultural and political ways. The governments need to understand that the solution of this problem will be resolved if all the sectors of the society be part of it. Not only commercial operators, not only internet access through government programs without a holistic approach of all State policies, making all the actions to solve the digital divide more integrated, efficient and respecting the rights of the citizens. |
|  | October 8, 2020 | [IGF Dynamic Coalition on Data Driven Health Technologies](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=12) | **Text provided in comment box:**  ​Comments 2 with focus on supports for eHealth service delivery 1) E-Health access for all has become a critical issue highlighted by the needs for access to health due to the Corvid 19 pandemic. From information on public awareness, dissemination of information quickly, sharing of quality data between organizations, having access to electronic systems that can take vast amounts of data and then output that data in required formats, the need to educate staff to use electronic systems , the need for hardware, software, connectivity are all very current issues that have to be addressed to successfully control and eliminate Corvid19 and prepare the global community for the future . Ehealth delivery is a critical component of any modern public health care system and the infrastructure to support it is vital. There is a need to tailor solutions to technology available to communities and then advance all to a common data shareable standard if fast solutions to issues such as Pharma testing are to be effective so as to address the variations of a population's composition with respect to DNA, age and so forth. 3) Non profits both medical and technological ,me specially communitions et works can be helpful with ehealth service delivery. .a cost effective and fast results solution. |
|  | October 22, 2020 | [FGV Law School](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=13) | **Text provided in comment box:**  ​To contribute the ITU consultation on "Expanding Internet Connectivity", we offer the Official 2019 Outcome of the Dynamic Coalition on Community Connectivity (DC3) of the United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF). The DC3 is a multistakeholder group, fostering a cooperative analysis of community networks, exploring how such initiatives can improve and expand connectivity while empowering Internet users. Community Networks (CNs) are crowd-sourced collaborative networks, developed in a bottom-up fashion by groups of individuals – i.e. communities – that design, develop and manage the network infrastructure as a common resource. This book provides concrete suggestions regarding the policy elements that should be considered by regulators and other stakeholders alike in order to develop enabling frameworks for community networks. This work complements the previous DC3 publications dedicated to “Community Connectivity: Building the Internet from Scratch” (2016); “Community Networks: the Internet by the People, for the People” (2017); and “The Community Network Manual: How to Build the Internet Yourself” (2018). All DC3 publications are freely available on the IGF website and at www.comconnectivity.org The purpose of this volume is therefore to offer a solid base for discussion on how CN policies and regulations might be elaborated, in the hope that such suggestions can be useful to start a constructive multistakeholder dialogue leading to positive change. The three sections of this volume have been crafted in a collaborative fashion with the goal of offering a pragmatic guide to any stakeholder interested in understanding what CNs are, which elements and actions are essential to develop CN policies, and how such elements could look like in a potential policy blueprint. |
|  | October 22, 2020 | [Dynamic Coalition on Community Connectivity (DC3)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=14) | **Text provided in comment box:**  ​On behalf of the Dynamic Coalition on Community Connectivity (DC3) of the United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF), I would like to offer the book “The Community Network Manual: How to Build the Internet Yourself” as a contribution to the ongoing ITU consultation on "Expanding Internet Connectivity". This volume is the 2018 annual outcome of the DC3, which is a multistakeholder group, created within the IGF, to foster a cooperative analysis of community networks, exploring how such initiatives can improve and expand connectivity while empowering Internet users. Community networks are collaborative networks, developed in a bottom-up fashion by group of individuals – i.e. a community – that conceives, deploys, and lastly manages the new network infrastructure as a common good. Besides being particularly useful in terms of connectivity expansion and, therefore, fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals – notably Goal 9 – the raise of CNs also offers a solid demonstration of how Internet governance processes can allow different stakeholders to cooperate to achieve common goals and concretely influence the evolution of the Internet. The fundamental goal of this volume is to provide to any interested person a manual offering instructions, strategies and useful suggestions to create CNs, make them sustainable and scalable, while being mindful of complying with regulation, thus keeping networks as spaces for the enjoyment and promotion of rights and respect of legislation. In this volume you will find the following content: PREFACE, by Bruno Ramos 1 Community Networks: Bridging Digital Divides through the Enjoyment of Network Self-determination, by Luca Belli PART I: How to Build your Community Network 2 Building Community Wireless Networks: A How-to Guide for the Curious, by Steven Mansour and Sascha Meinrath 3 Building Community LTE Networks with CoLTE, by Spencer Sevilla, Pathirat Kosakanchit, Matthew Johnson and Kurtis Heimerl 4 The MAZI Toolkit for Do-It-Yourself Networking, by Harris Niavis, Stavroula Maglavera, Aris Dadoukis and John Mavridis 5 LibreRouter: the Hardware and Software Platform for Community Networking, by Nicolas Echániz and Florencia López Pezé PART II: Scalable, Sustainable and Law-compliant Community Networks 6 Multiple Dimensions of Community Network Scalability, by Roger Baig Viñas, Leandro Navarro and Ramon Roca i Tió 7 Federating Community Networks: A Case-study from France, by Félix Tréguer 8 Fostering Sustainability of Community Networks: Guidelines to Respect the European Legal Framework, by Virginie Aubrée and Mélanie Dulong de Rosnay 9 Complementary Networks Meet Complementary Currencies: Guifi.net Meets Sardex.net, by Panayotis Antoniadis, Jens Martignoni, Leandro Navarro and Paolo Dini 10 What Could Blockchain do for Community Networks, by Panayotis Antoniadis and Jens Martignoni 11 DECLARATION ON COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY |
|  | November 6, 2020 | [Association for Proper Internet Governance](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=15) | **Text provided in comment box:**  ​As we already stated in our contributions to previous opens consultation on this topic, the key issues for expanding Internet connectivity are to reduce the cost of connectivity and to maintain trust and security. Reducing the cost of connectivity can be achieved by fostering competition (which may include functional separation), funding infrastructure, taking steps to reduce the cost of international connectivity, supporting the development of local content, capacity building, and a proper governance system. Maintaining trust and security can be achieved by protecting human rights, protecting data privacy, combating spam, protecting consumers, enabling pervasive strong encryption, and curtailing unnecessary and disproportionate mass surveillance. Further, it is time to recognize that colonialist attitudes left over from the past are not appropriate and must be banned. And the time has come to make the world a better place by using the Internet to increase social justice: the fair and just relation between the individual and society, measured in terms of the explicit and tacit terms for the distribution of wealth, opportunities for personal activity and social privileges. And the time has come to abandon neo-liberal policies that are in reality corporatist policies that favor the techno-imperialistic geopolitical and geoeconomic goals of one particular country. |
|  | November 6, 2020 | [Association for Proper Internet Governance](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=16) | **Text provided in comment box:**  **​​**Funding the rollout of national infrastructure and the cost of international connectivity have always been challenges for providing affordable Internet connectivity, particularly to remote and under-served areas. Either the private sector, or the public sector, or a combination of both must find sources of revenue to fund the rollout of infrastructure and the cost of international connectivity. It is now widely recognized that data is the “new oil”, that is, a new resource that is being exploited to create value and, unfortunately, to concentrate value in a few large companies. Some of that value should be tapped locally in order to provide the needed revenues for expanding Internet connectivity. A recent paper by IT for Change, reproduced below, well outlines what needs to be done in this respect at the national level. |
|  | November 6, 2020 | [Association for Proper Internet Governance](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=17) | **Text provided in comment box:**  **​**As stated in one of the essays for the collection Digital New Deal, it is important to focus on the political context in which the consolidation of the dominant digital paradigm takes place. The essay is structured into three parts: we first describe the role of technology companies in restructuring the global economy and creating the economic and social vulnerabilities that have been exposed by the current global health crisis. We then identify some trends that are likely to be exacerbated by the pandemic, specifically the growing public reliance on tech firms for basic services, the influence of tech firms on public debates, and the attempts by tech firms to capture civil society organizations and social movements through their philanthrocapitalism. We eventually sketch a policy framework to help address these dangers and to avoid a corporate hijack of the post-Covid 19 future, arguing that state regulatory and fiscal capacities must be strengthened and that independent research must be funded by the tax revenues extracted from tech giants. Civil society organizations could contribute by forming transnational alliances to keep tech giants in check and help engage citizens in public debate. |
|  | December 5, 2020 | [KICTANet](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=18) | **Text provided in comment box:**  ​KICTANet has worked with Community Networks for several years, and in 2020, it produced the first Policy brief on Community Networks in the region. Community networks have been shown to be very effective in achieving affordable access to the internet. Countries especially in the global south should put in place policies and regulations that target affordable access for the underserved. These policies can take several forms like; 1. Tax incentives. 2. Mandating infrastructure sharing (enabling communities to access government infrastructure or infrastructure of established operators). 3. Expansion of license-exempt frequencies. 4. Adoption of dynamic spectrum licensing and spectrum sharing. 5. Streamlining licensing procedures to make them accessible to communities. 6. Governments to mandate funding for universal network access, and allocate a portion of that funding for the growth of community networks. 7. Capacity-building at the community level to ensure communities have the knowledge to implement community networks. 8. Structured dialogue between all stakeholders to find ways community networks can be supported and be more widespread in underserved areas. |
|  | December 11, 2020 | [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=19) | **Text provided in comment box:**  **​**Access to internet is a necessity for economic and human development for countries. The challenges of expanding Internet connectivity to remote and under-served areas include (i) the low return of investment by Operators and Tower companies, (ii) the affordability of internet connectivity in rural areas, and (iii) licensing frameworks and application processes are unclear making operators who venture into business shun remote and under-served areas. The opportunities include, (i) provision of clear licensing framework guidelines that encourage investment in outlying areas, (ii) the potential to simplify and make transparent the application process and conditions for obtaining an operator’s license, (iii) to encourage investment in Internet connectivity, governments or regulatory authorities should consider wavering or removing the minimum capital requirements for Operators. In summary, the greatest opportunities are what internet connectivity brings to remote and under-served areas, essential services such as education and healthcare. Landlocked countries do not have access to undersea cables. Without access to the undersea cables, landlocked countries have to rely on satellite internet connections. As a result, affordability of internet and the return on investment (ROI) in landlocked countries is low. This is mainly due to the geographic remoteness and their further distant to the nearest undersea cable node, implying a cost of laying a transporting cable to the landlocked. There are interventions that can be done to address these challenges. These include, for example providing unused satellite bandwidth (for example to land-locked countries in sub-Saharan Africa). Small community based or non-profit operators can increase the Internet Connectivity, if proper policy regulations allow them to operate. The small operators are usual SMEs with various business models, their being local and being social-purpose operators makes them important for development – their focus might not necessarily be profit oriented. There are other value-added services that small operators can provide to their communities, such as digital literacy training in combination with other developmental partners (or NGOs) like MercyCorps and the Digital Opportunity Trust. Examples includes The Giga Model by UNESCO and ITU and Smart Villages by ITU – in collaboration with FAO, UNESCO and WHO. |
|  | December 11, 2020 | [UK Government](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=20) | **Summary provided in the Contribution**  The internet is a critical enabler of economic and social development. However, in order to expand connectivity to all citizens, there are significant challenges that must be overcome. We need to 1) build an open, competitive market environment for broadband providers 2) develop policies to support infrastructure deployment 3) ensure effective spectrum management. The broader environment is also important in terms of skills, local content and languages and the business and legal environment. In addition, harnessing the potential of community networks and introducing measures to support landlocked countries will be key for reaching underserved regions. |
|  | December 15, 2020 | [Viasat](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=21) | **Text provided in comment box:**  ​Viasat is pleased to provide its response to the ITU CWG-Internet's Open Consultation "International Internet-Related Public Policy Issues on Expanding Internet Connectivity." In short, we believe that the opportunities presented by advances in high throughput satellite technology outweigh the challenges incorporated in closing the digital divide once and for all. We outline real-world case studies of successful alternative models for doing just that, and best practices for ensuring that connectivity policies are successful. |
|  | December 15, 2020 | [Access Now](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=22) | **Text provided in comment box:**  **​**This submission raises three main points to address the CWG-Internet’s first of three questions relating to expanding internet connectivity. First, expanding access to the internet is critical because — as amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic ​— access to the internet is essential for meaningful participation in daily life. Yet, access to the internet is more than a question about connectivity and coverage areas. Public policies regarding access to the internet must also consider the type and quality of internet accessible, and by whom. Specifically, governments and non-government actors, such as the private sector, must foster a rights-respecting internet underpinned by the principles of universality, openness, security, and affordability, in addition to legislation, policies, and infrastructure, aimed to maintain a resilient and inclusive internet ecosystem. Second, we cannot achieve the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) without universal access to affordable, open, secure, and high-quality internet. Similarly, we need to better understand the role technology plays in maintaining systems of exclusion, oppression, and marginalization. Digital inclusion must serve as a vehicle to ensure that all individuals and communities have access to and skills to use the internet irrespective of one’s intersecting identity. Third, expanding connectivity and reaching U.N. targets for internet access is necessary for the realization of all of the SDGs. This online consultation is timely presented in 2020, the target year identified in U.N. SDG 9.C calling for universal and affordable internet access in least developed countries. The shortest deadline captured in SDG 9.C reflects an understanding of the urgent need to bring all people online as a means to enable the realization of other rights and goals as indicated in the overall 2030 agenda. A month away from the end of 2020, it is clear that we will fail to meet SDG 9.C amid a pandemic. Yet, if we do not remobilize political will to expand internet access, we will potentially fail to meet all of the SDGs by 2030. |
|  | December 15, 2020 | [Al Sur](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-sep2020.aspx?ListItemID=23) | **Text provided in comment box:**  ​This document is presented by the Al Sur consortium (a group of 11 civil society organizations and academia from eight different countries that works to strengthen human rights in the digital context) and was prepared by one of its members, Karisma Foundation (Colombia), in response to the request made by the ITU for civil society to report problems and challenges for the expansion of connectivity in rural and remote areas, and the role of community networks in this process of reducing the urban-rural digital gap. Although we present a regional framework, the document focuses on Colombia's situation as a country that offers an overview of the region's average. The document especially presents the barriers derived from the public policy vision that refers to the ICT sector and reflects the different governments' position in Latin America, especially its market vision to close the digital connectivity gap through commercial licenses of the electromagnetic spectrum. Although the complexity and diversity of digital gaps are appointed, the analysis is based on the connectivity diagnosis that shows how in this digital gap the distance between urban and rural is evident, and the differences between the major cities compared to scattered rural areas are very worrying. Finally, throughout the document, the aim is to highlight the role, still incipient, of community networks, which has excellent potential for reducing the digital connectivity gap. We understand that an English translation could benefit all readers, so we could provide it at the end of the week and send it by mail (to InternetPublicViews@itu.int) or any other way if that is an option. |
|  | December 15, 2020 | [APC](https://www.itu.int/en/SiteAssets/Lists/consultationSep2020/AllItems/APC-ITU-CWG-Submission-Dec-2020.pdf) | **Conclusion taken from the Contribution (no summary provided):**  Despite the evident value of small/community/non-profit networks in addressing needs for connectivity in the areas in developing countries without affordable communications infrastructure, there are still relatively few such networks in these locations. Although there is clearly a lack of awareness of their potential, and human capacity limitations, the primary restriction is the lack of conducive regulatory environments in most developing countries as indicated above. Although a few countries have adopted a licensing framework which includes provision for community operators, such as Argentina and Brazil, in general, license fees and the compliance requirements of the license are too onerous for small networks. In addition the commercial conditions required to access the fibre backbones of national operators for upstream links is often not cost effective relative to the low volume of traffic of small networks, resulting in unsustainable services. Lack of access to fixed and mobile spectrum, or interconnection of voice calls directly with the national operators can also be an issue, often necessitating the use of international VoIP trunking on backhaul links, which further adds to operational costs and lower quality services. |