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| **Informal Experts Group on WTPF-21 Fifth meeting – Virtual meeting, 31 May-2 June 2021** |  |
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|  | **Document IEG-WTPF-21-5/6 -E** |
|  | **1 May 2021** |
|  | **English only** |
| **Contribution submitted by the Federative Republic of Brazil** | |
| Proposal for the text of new draft opinions for wtpf-21 resulting from INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS | |

At the fourth meeting of IEG-WTPF-21, members were requested by the Chair to consolidate similar contributions so that the Group can focus on a manageable number of draft Opinions (a suggested maximum of 5-6 opinions) and work towards a consensus.

A number of proposals for merging and consolidating the draft Opinions currently set out in the fifth draft of the SG Report were received for discussion at the fourth meeting. However, no consensus was reached during this meeting and it was agreed that further informal consultations would continue ahead of the fifth IEG-WTPF meeting in May 2021.

Accordingly, Brazil has engaged in and coordinated informal discussions with various other IEG members in the period following the February 2021 meeting, with a view to advance agreement towards the merger and text of the Draft Opinions under consideration. The various concerns and differing views have been considered and the language proposed in the Draft Opinions seeks to attain a delicate balance in this regard. These are provided below for the consideration of the meeting.

Draft Opinions proposed:

**New Draft Opinion 1.** Enabling environment for the development and deployment of new and emerging connectivity solutions to advance sustainable development

**New Draft Opinion 2.** Connectivity for sustainable development

**New Draft Opinion 3.** Digital literacy and skills for inclusive access

**New Draft Opinion 4.** New technologies and services to facilitate the use of telecommunications/ICTs

for sustainable development

**New Draft Opinion 5.** Trust in the era of new and emerging Telecommunications/ICTs

**New Draft Opinion 6.** Use of telecommunications/ICTs in pandemic preparedness and response

**DRAFT OPINION 1: Enabling environment for the development and deployment of new and emerging connectivity solutions to advance sustainable development**

The sixth World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum (Geneva, 2021),

*recalling*

a) Resolution 70/125 of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), on the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS);

b) UNGA Resolution 74/197, on information and communications technologies for sustainable development, which encourages the development of viable strategies that could result in further competitiveness, investment and rapid reductions in the cost of information and communications technologies;

c) Resolution 71 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, on the strategic plan for the Union for 2020-2023, which aims to foster an enabling policy and regulatory environment conducive to sustainable telecommunication/ICT development;

d) Resolution 201 (Rev. Dubai 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, on creating an enabling environment for the deployment and use of information and communication technology applications;

e) Opinion 2 (Geneva, 2013) of the Fifth World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum, on fostering an enabling environment for the greater growth and development of broadband connectivity;

*considering*

a) that effective “policies for mobilizing new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development,” depend on a thorough understanding of issues such as, *inter alia*, access and inclusion, affordability, trust, digital literacy, training and skills development;

b) that the Preamble of the ITU Constitution fully recognizes the sovereign right of each Member State to decide on its own telecommunications policy;

c) that various stakeholders, including policymakers, regulators, the private sector, consumers, academic institutions and others play an important role in creating an enabling environment that mobilizes new and emerging technologies;

d) that the Buenos Aires Declaration adopted by the 2017 World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-17) states that “that public investment, private investment, as well as public-private partnerships and resource mobilization, need to be further strengthened in order to identify and apply innovative technological solutions and financing mechanisms for inclusive and sustainable development”;

*recognizing*

a) that accelerating broadband development is a considerable challenge, especially in hard-to-reach areas where topography and demography make the return-on-investment challenging;

b) that investments, often focused on the early development and deployment of new and emerging technologies, should also focus on mobilizing such technologies for sustainable development at later stages;

c) that ICT investments – including those in new and emerging technologies – should be coordinated among by all relevant sectors to avoid significant fragmentation and duplication of efforts;

d) that a appropriate government role coordinated approach to ICT investments is instrumental in connecting the unconnected and driving the development of new and emerging technologies ranging from AI to 5G that are central to the digital economy, digital inclusion and sustainable development;

*is of the view*

a) that inclusive access to and use of new and emerging technologies have the potential to accelerate progress across all the UN Sustainable Development Goals;

b) that the establishment of an enabling environment for investment is critical to mobilizing such technologies for sustainable development, including AI, IoT, 5G, Big Data and OTT;

c) that the removal of barriers to investment and innovation is essential to mobilizing such technologies;

d) that facilitating private sector investment in rural and remote areas by using targeted government support is needed where the business case for private investment is otherwise lacking, especially for deploying such technologies;

e) that use of such technologies can empower women, people with disabilities, indigenous people and marginalised groups, including in the development of skills;

f) that use of such technologies can promote sustainable development, and that policies in the field of telecommunications/ICTs should consider environmental challenges such as climate change mitigation;

g) that an enabling environment for the development and deployment of such technologies is based on transparent, stable, predictable, non-discriminatory policies that promote innovation and investment, from both public and private sources;

h) that all stakeholders should continue to work together to encourage and promote exchange of information, capacity building, and best practices to create an enabling environment for the mobilization of such technologies;

*invites Member States*

1. to consider how best to ensure that regulatory frameworks maintain a separation between policy, regulatory and sector operation functions to ensure a transparent, predictable, competitive, independent and non-discriminatory regulatory environment;

2. to take a appropriate government role approach to ICT investments[[1]](#footnote-1), including for investments in new and emerging technologies;

3. to remove unnecessary barriers to investments in digital ecosystems;

4. to consider how best to promote taxation and licensing policies in order to encourage long term and sustained investment from the private sector in areas such as 5G and IoT;

5. to review rules and policies to make it easier for the private sector to invest, innovate, and upgrade their existing networks to support new and emerging technologies;

6. to adopt flexible, streamlined, technology neutral, and innovative spectrum policies to encourage the development and deployment of new and emerging technologies;

7. to foster an awareness of environmental challenges such as climate change and its mitigation in developing policies;

*invites Member States, Sector Members and other stakeholders to work collaboratively*

1. to consider policies that enable the mobilization of new and emerging technologies pertaining to telecommunications/ICTs such as AI, Big Data, IoT, OTTs and 5G to support sustainable development;

2. to consider how OTTs can promote economic development across the economy, as well as the steps needed to encourage traditional operators to adapt their business models;

3. to facilitate innovative access to finance, including through public-private partnership models;

4. to promote infrastructure sharing models in order to reduce the costs of investment in new and emerging technologies and their applications;

5. to help ensure that investment is focused not only on the development of new and emerging technologies but also on mobilizing them for sustainable development;

6. to promote competition and private sector investment to encourage the continuing growth and adoption of new and emerging technologies that will advance economic growth and opportunities at the national, regional and global levels;

7. to foster policy environments based on transparency, stability, predictability, and non-discriminatory measures, and the promotion of innovation;

8. to seek to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in local populations, including by encouraging community support for entrepreneurship and locally based programmes;

9. to encourage the private sector to develop applications and services based on new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs, taking into account diverse user needs by working with women and girls, people with disabilities and indigenous people, youth and children;

10. to facilitate public-private investment by promoting closer cooperation between education and research centres and the private sector in emerging areas such as AI and 5G;

11. to consult with all stakeholders, including the private sector, academia, civil society, and the technical community to ensure that an enabling policy environment implemented at the national level reflects all stakeholder views and needs;

*invites the Secretary-General*

to ensure that ITU is used as a platform for cooperation between Member States, the private sector, international funding agencies and other stakeholders to implement an enabling policy environment to foster investment in new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs.

**DRAFT OPINION 2: Connectivity for sustainable development**

The sixth World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum (Geneva, 2021),

*recalling*

a) Resolution 70/1 of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), on Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

b) Resolution 137 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, on next-generation network deployment in developing countries;

c) Resolution 200 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, on the Connect 2030 Agenda for global telecommunication/ICT;

d) Resolution 203 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, on connectivity to broadband networks;

*recognizing*

a) that new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs ecosystems, including next generation wireless connectivity such as 5G, will underpin the digital economy of the future and enable advances in technologies and services including AI, IoT, Big Data and OTTs;

b) that encouraging the deployment of next generation networks, including 5G and other new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs, especially in unserved and underserved areas, is critical for sustainable development;

c) that the private sector has a leading role in deploying 5G and other new and emerging telecommunication/ICT networks, including non-terrestrial technologies such as satellite, and that it is exploring innovations in technology and business models alongside other stakeholders including government, academia, and civil society;

d) that a digital divide remains between certain segments of populations who can access, afford and adopt new and emerging telecommunication/ICTs and those who cannot, and that in particular, any obstacles in access to and use by women and girls will affect prosperity and limit social and sustainable economic development;

e) that policymakers can help connect the unconnected by creating an enabling policy environment that encourages and supports private sector investment and innovation;

*reaffirming*

everyone’s fundamental right to communicate and right of access to means of communication;

*welcoming*

the affirmation by the UN Secretary-General’s Roadmap for Digital Cooperation that every person has safe and affordable access to the Internet by 2030, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals;

*is of the view*

a) that investment in infrastructure, in particular in broadband and 5G infrastructure, plays a fundamental role in promoting affordable connectivity and in mobilizing new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development;

b) that the following policies can be used to mobilize new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development:

i) streamlining the processes to facilitate deployment of wireless and wireline communications networks, including policies for access to rights-of-way and other rules that may affect next-generation network deployment;

ii) educating all levels of society − especially local government officials responsible for permitting wireless and wireline infrastructure – about the importance of next generation connectivity for socio-economic progress and the established safety standards for EMF emissions;

iii) making sufficient spectrum available for a wide array of new and emerging telecommunications/ICT and services, including 5G, in high, mid and low frequency bands;

iv) modernizing regulatory frameworks applicable to small cell infrastructure, which is essential to deployment of next generation services including 5G, and recognizing that not all rules applicable to the large cell towers would be appropriate for small cell deployment;

v) investing in digital infrastructure that can deliver reusable digital services at scale with a greater return on investment;

vi) mapping the coverage of existing networks in order to identify where broadband service is currently available, where it is still needed, and using that information to guide and shape policy responses;

vii) ensuring that access to network connectivity, including for new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs, are fully incorporated into country economic and social development plans and strategies, and is seen as central to a country’s ongoing economic and social development;

*invites Member States*

1. to consider whether the adoption of the policies above would contribute to sustainable development in their own national context;

2. to continue to promote affordable connectivity, as a fundamental requirement for mobilizing new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development;

3. to consider how the use of shared digital services can support sustainable development by lowering the cost of doing business, improving service offerings and enabling access to new markets, particularly in areas such as 5G roll-out;

4. to consider adopting policy and regulatory measures that facilitate infrastructure deployment in rural and isolated areas, including the sharing of infrastructure, interconnectivity and effective use of spectrum;

*invites Member States, Sector Members and other stakeholders to work collaboratively*

1. to reinforce the existing links between the WSIS Action Lines, in particular Action Lines 5 and 7, and the Sustainable Development Goals and targets;

3. to consider policies to ensure that applications benefit citizens, businesses, governments and other stakeholders, particularly in areas such as AI, IoT, 5G, Big Data and OTTs;

4. to increase investment in network infrastructure deployment, including 5G and next-generation technologies, in order to strengthen ubiquitous Internet connectivity, which will mobilize new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs;

5. to continue to share their own experiences on 5G, connectivity, and bridging the digital divide to the ongoing discussions at the ITU on promoting sustainable development;

6. to promote new and potentially transformative models to accelerate connectivity, such as the GIGA initiative of ITU and UNICEF;

*invites the SG*

to continue to strengthen ITU efforts to promote universal, affordable and trusted connectivity through new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development.

**DRAFT OPINION 3: Digital literacy and skills for inclusive access**

The sixth World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum (Geneva, 2021),

*recalling*

a) Resolution 70/1 of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

b) UNGA Resolution 72/235, on Human resources development;

c) the Geneva Declaration of Principles, adopted in 2003;

d) the 2005 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) outcome documents;

e) Resolution 139 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), on Telecommunications/information and communication technologies to bridge the digital divide and build an inclusive information society;

f) Resolution 198 (Rev. Dubai 2018), on Empowerment of youth through telecommunication/information and communication technology;

g) Resolution 205 (Dubai, 2018), on ITU’s role in fostering telecommunication/information and communication technology-centric innovation to support the digital economy and society;

h) World Telecommunication Development Conference Resolution 40 (Rev. Buenos Aires 2017), on capacity building initiatives;

*considering*

a) that a lack of digital skills is an important barrier to the uptake and effective use of the Internet;

b) that the development and improvement of human capacity building in new and emerging technologies such as AI, IoT, 5G, Big Data and OTTs is a fundamental part of an inclusive Information Society;

c) that developing countries face specific challenges in digital skills development;

*bearing in mind*

a) that the rapid development of new and emerging technologies creates new requirements and expectations on employees;

b) that ensuring digital literacy and skills for inclusive access requires a flexible approach to meet the various needs and conditions of each individual country;

*is of the view*

a) that policies fostering digital literacy, training and skills development can be instrumental in mobilizing new and emerging technologies for sustainable development;

b) that education and training in such technologies is critically important to reduce the gap and promote equal opportunities between countries with different levels of economic and technological development;

*invites Member States*

1. to identify and measure the digital literacy and skills required for accessing new and emerging technologies;

2. to identify gaps in digital skills curricula in education, apprenticeships and other youth skills development programs;

3. to promote policies aimed at expanding opportunities and enhancing human potential to leverage new and emerging technologies focused on ICT-based education, training and skills development for all;

*invites Member States and other stakeholders*

1. to explore ways and means for greater collaboration and coordination among governments, the private sector, international and intergovernmental organizations, civil society, the technical community and academia to implement human skills development in new and emerging technologies, especially in developing countries;

2. to foster the incorporation of such technologies, digital literacy, and the development of ICT skills and STEM skills in general into education and human resources development for all;

3. promote access to e-learning opportunities, particularly in rural and remote areas;

4. encourage investment in the quality of teaching, education and training of digital skills, including for women and girls, people with disabilities, indigenous people and marginalized groups, to promote skills in new and emerging technologies in areas including AI, IoT, 5G, Big Data and others;

5. to share best practice in technology-related education, skills and training programmes among ITU Members;

*invites the Secretary-General*

to support the effective implementation of the relevant ITU capacity building programs and activities that promote education, digital literacy, training and skills development, with a focus on new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs, to foster digital empowerment and inclusion for all.

**DRAFT OPINION 4: New technologies and services to facilitate the use of telecommunications/ICTs   
for sustainable development**

The sixth World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum (Geneva, 2021),

*recalling*

a) Resolution 70/1 of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), on Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

b) UNGA Resolution 70/125: Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS);

c) relevant WSIS Action Lines and relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

d) Resolution 71 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), on the Strategic Plan of the Union;

e) Resolution 206 (Dubai, 2018), on OTTs;

*recognizing*

a) that new and emerging digital technologies in telecommunications/ICTs such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and others are enablers of the global transition to the digital economy and inclusive economic growth by accelerating the benefits of digital transformation for different industries, thereby furthering our shared goal to advance the SDGs;

b) that AI, Internet of Things (IoT), OTT, 5G/IMT-2020, Big Data evolutions are enormous and that countries will harvest its benefits, however, developing countries are at the highest risk of being left behind,

c) that that AI should be designed in a way that enables their decisions/actions to be explained and humans to be accountable for their use;

d) that it is important to ensure trusted, safe and inclusive development of new and emerging digital technologies and equitable access to their benefits;

e) that constructive strategies, policies, regulations, guidelines or principles are needed to maximize the benefits of new and emerging digital technologies in telecommunications/ICTs and in particular AI;

f) that ITU, as the UN specialized agency for ICTs, plays a leading role in the implementation of the WSIS outcomes and, through it, the achievement of the SDGs;

g) the ongoing work in ITU and particularly in ITU study groups related to new and emerging digital technologies in telecommunications/ICTs, including inter alia AI and machine learning, Internet of things (IoT), Big Data, quantum computing, OTT, 5G/IMT-2020, and distributed ledger technologies;

*is of the view*

a) that Member States, working closely with all other stakeholders, should undertake and prioritize efforts to foster an enabling environment for digital innovation ecosystems, for inclusive growth and development of new and emerging technologies in telecommunications/ICTs, in particular AI, through global coherent approach and action;

b) that policy challenges related to new and emerging digital technologies in telecommunications/ICTs need to be addressed at the regional and international levels, with the full involvement of all stakeholders from all countries, especially from developing countries;

c) that all stakeholders need to work closely together to address common challenges in the use of AI, IoT, Big Data, OTT, 5G/IMT-2020, etc., such as confidence and security, inclusiveness, transparency, bias, accountability, representativeness and interoperability;

d) that ITU, in collaboration with other UN agencies and international organizations, should continue to support its membership and other stakeholders to take advantage of the opportunities and address the challenges caused by AI and other new and emerging digital technologies in telecommunication/ICTs;

e) that all stakeholders should be encouraged to implement projects, programmes, and initiatives related to AI so that all stakeholders from all nations could benefit from the use of AI and other new and emerging digital technologies in telecommunications/ICTs to achieve the SDGs;

*invites Member States, Sector Members, and all other stakeholders*

1. to work collaboratively to utilize the potential that AI and other new and emerging digital technologies in telecommunications/ICTs can provide to achieve the SDGs;

2. to promote public policies and strategies at the national, regional, and international levels to overcome challenges in the use of new and emerging digital technologies in telecommunications/ICTs and in particular AI;

3. to support the participation of all stakeholders from developing countries in the activities of entities, organizations and institutions and within initiatives related to various aspects of the new and emerging digital technologies in telecommunications/ICTs, especially AI;

*invites the Secretary-General*

to support the processes and activities, within ITU’s mandate, that enable ITU membership to take advantage of the opportunities and address the challenges caused by AI and other new and emerging digital technologies in telecommunications/ICTs.

**DRAFT OPINION 5: Trust in the era of new and emerging Telecommunications/ICTs**

The sixth World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum (Geneva, 2021),

recalling

a) Resolution 70/1 of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), on Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

b) UNGA Resolution 70/125: Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS);

c) UNGA Resolution 68/167, on the right to privacy in the digital age;

d) relevant WSIS Action Lines and relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

e) the cybersecurity-related provisions of the Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society and the outcome document of the UNGA high-level meeting on the overall review of the implementation of WSIS;

f) Resolution 101 (Dubai, 2018), Resolution 102 (Dubai, 2018), Resolution 133 (Dubai, 2018), and other relevant Resolutions of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference;

g) the cybersecurity-related provisions of the Report of the Secretary-General Roadmap for Digital Cooperation (UNGA A/74/821),

recognizing

a) that in the context of multi -stakeholders approach, government, private sector, other organizations, and individual users must be aware of relevant cybersecurity risks and preventive measures and should assume responsibility and take steps to enhance the security and build confidence in the use of telecommunications/ICTs, particularly those that apply new and emerging technologies;

b) the increasing reliance of governments, businesses and individual users on new and emerging digital technologies such as AI, 5G, Big Data, IoTs, OTTs and others to deliver essential services and exchange of information;

c) that these new and emerging digital technologies, driven by innovation, are rapidly evolving, bringing new opportunities and challenges, especially those related to building confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs and such technologies in particular, and policy-makers need to keep pace with changes to utilize the opportunities and overcome the challenges;

e) that governments are pursuing digital transformations by adopting digital technologies, including new and emerging technologies, to deliver their services to the public; building confidence and security in these services are crucial factors to achieve digital transformation and to meet national needs and priorities;

d) that the growing number of cyber threats and cyberattacks against the background of competing standards and approaches, and exacerbates the need for greater international cooperation to mitigate such threats and attacks;

g) the fact that ICTs are critical factors for economic development, employment growth, and social welfare, and threats on ICTs are threats on economic and social welfare of States;

h) the important role played by the private sector, civil society, international organizations and technical communities in building confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs;

i) that the ITU Global Cybersecurity Agenda (GCA) encourages international cooperation by offering a framework to enhance confidence and security in the use of ICTs;

is of the view

a) that there is a need for a global commitment to propose priorities for building confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs, especially new and emerging technologies, by virtue of a multi-stakeholder approach;

b) that all stakeholders, including governments, should work to strengthen trust in new and emerging digital technologies, including through building confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs and developing recommendations on measures to mitigate violations in cyberspace as well as ensuring respect and protection for the right to privacy in the digital age;

d) that particular attention should be paid to ensuring the protection of vulnerable populations, including women and children, as well as people with disabilities and special needs;

e) that coordinated actions are needed to prevent “digital addiction”, especially among the younger generation;

f) that the GCA framework should continue to be utilized to further guide ITU, in its role as the UN specialized agency for ICTs and WSIS Action Line C5 Facilitator, to build confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs;

g) that ITU should collaborate closely with other UN agencies and international organizations that may have the lead mandate and expertise in relevant areas concerning the right to privacy in the digital age,

invites Member States, Sector Members, and all other stakeholders

to work collaboratively and build confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs especially in the application of new and emerging digital technologies in telecommunications/ICTs,

invites the Secretary-General

to support the activities related to building confidence and security in the use of new and emerging digital technologies in telecommunications/ICTs in relation to this Opinion.

**DRAFT OPINION 6: Use of telecommunications/ICTs in pandemic preparedness and response**

The sixth World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum (Geneva, 2021),

*Recalling*

a) Resolution 74/270 of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), on global solidarity in the fight against coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), which calls on the United Nations system to work with all relevant actors to mobilize a coordinated global effort in response to the pandemic and its adverse social, economic and financial consequences for all countries;

b) UNGA Resolution 74/306, on comprehensive and coordinated response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic;

c) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”, as well as SDG 9 “Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”, and SDG 11 “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable» the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

d) Article 40 of the ITU Constitution, on the priority of telecommunications related to the safety of human life;

e) Chapter VII of the ITU Radio Regulations for distress and safety communications, and Article 5 of the International Telecommunication Regulations on the safety of human life and telecommunication priorities;

f) Resolution 136 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of Plenipotentiary Conference, on the use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs) for humanitarian assistance and for monitoring and management in emergency and disaster situations, including health-related emergencies, for early warning, prevention, mitigation and relief;

g) Resolution 202 (Busan, 2014) of Plenipotentiary Conference, on using ICTS to break the chain of health-related emergencies such as Ebola virus transmission;

h) Subparagraph ‘c’ of paragraph 20 of WSIS Action Line C7 (Electronic Environmental Protection) of the Geneva Plan of Action, which calls for the establishment of ICT-based monitoring systems for forecasting and monitoring the impact of natural and man-made disasters, especially in developing countries;

*bearing in mind*

a) the significant potential of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs in improving the response to emergencies caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and improving the effectiveness of their prevention and mitigation;

b) the tragic events around the world related to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, which clearly show the need for high-quality ICT platforms and infrastructure;

c) the need for collection and dissemination of relevant information to assist public safety, and support the work of health and disaster relief agencies;

d) the need to promote affordable connectivity to ensure that everyone has access to telecommunications/ICTS and to maintain continuity of everyday social and economic processes and leaving no one excluded by using telecommunications/ICTs;

e) the need to minimize risks to human life and health and the necessity to meet the urgent needs of the population for information and communication;

f) the need for affordable access to telecommunications/ICTs and their effective functioning to mitigate social consequences, provide humanitarian assistance, and develop economic responses for sustainable and inclusive recovery;

*recognizing*

a) that substantial digital divides exist within and among countries and regions, and that many regions lack affordable access to ICTs as stated in UNGA Resolution 74/306;

b) the critical role that governments, the private sector, civil society, the technical community and other stakeholders play in enabling affordable connectivity for all and the need for all stakeholders to work collaboratively together to this end;

c) that international organisations play a key role in convening stakeholders, offering support and facilitating sharing of best practices for the development of affordable connectivity and supporting humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts;

d) that the role of ITU, as the UN specialized agency for ICTs, is central to advancing the implementation of WSIS Action Lines and achieving the SDGs;

e) the ongoing work in ITU, including ITU Study Groups, related to new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs and trends, a wide range of ITU standards, ensuring the efficient use of telecommunication/ICT systems and applications for solving various social, economic and production tasks, as well as other relevant best practices;

f) ITU’s response to the pandemic has been comprehensive and brought together ITU Members, partners and several UN agencies in areas as diverse and critical as digital finance, e-education, e-health, e-government and teleworking, including:

i) the creation of the Global Network Resiliency Platform (REG4COVID);

ii) the launch of new guidelines on emergency telecommunications, child online protection, and on making digital information, services and products accessible to all people;

iii) strengthening of partnerships such as the ITU-WHO Focus Group on Artificial Intelligence for Health, the ITU-UNICEF GIGA initiative to connect every school to the Internet, or the ITU-ILO initiative to boost decent jobs and enhance digital skill for the youth in Africa’s digital economy;

*is of the view that*

affordable access and connectivity to telecommunications/ICTs will play a critical role in helping to eliminate and manage the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as future pandemics;

*invites Member States*

1.to cooperate and offer all possible assistance and support to citizens, organizations, and, if possible, other countries, especially developing countries, in the provision of humanitarian assistance and health services and support for sectors related to telecommunications/ICTs, including for disease tracking, response, and public warning;

2. to ensure, in measures taken for the telecommunications/ICTs sector, the conditions for preserving, if possible, jobs, especially for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and continuing the educational process during a pandemic and mitigating its adverse social, economic and financial consequences;

3. to assist in the implementation of international, regional, subregional, multilateral and bilateral projects and programs that serve the interests of using telecommunications/ICTs as a support tool in responding to the consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic;

4. to take actions in the telecommunications/ICTs arena to help breaking the chain of emergency situations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to facilitate the elimination of its consequences, including providing local communities with infrastructure and information, especially in local languages, to help preserve human life;

3. to take an active role in developing and disseminating standards, guidelines and best practices for the use of telecommunications/ICTs in emergencies and disasters caused by epidemics and pandemics;

*invites the Secretary-General*

to continue to reinforce ITU’s efforts to bring together all stakeholders to strengthen the resilience of ICT networks and services to meet the challenges posed by current and future pandemics.

1. “SDG Digital Investment Framework - A whole-of-Government Approach to Investing in Digital Technologies to Achieve the SDGs”. ITU. 2019. <https://www.itu.int/myitu/-/media/Publications/2019-Publications/BDT-pubs-2019/SDG-Digital-Investment-Framework--A-wholeofGovernment-Approach-to-Investing-in-Digital-Technologies.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)