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| **Informal Experts Group on WTPF-21 Fifth meeting – Virtual meeting, 31 May-2 June 2021** |  |
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| Contribution submitted by the  United States of America and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland  DRAFT OPINION ON Fostering digital skills, education and inclusion | |
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The United States of America and United Kingdom are pleased to submit this contribution to the fifth meeting of the Informal Group of Experts.

Building upon prior contributions, we are seeking to consolidate views around Digital Skills and inclusion into a single, streamlined draft Opinion (refer to Annex A). We look forward to discussing this draft at the next meeting in an effort to work towards a consensus text.

***Annex: 1***

**ANNEX A**

OPINION [X] – Fostering digital skills, education and inclusion

The Sixth World Telecommunication/Information and Communication Technology 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 71 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), the ITU Strategic Plan 2020-2023, Goal 1 Growth, to enable and foster access to and increased use of telecommunications/ICT in support of 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 in the uptake and effective use of the Internet;

*b)* that to capitalize on the benefits of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs and keep pace with technology advances, new skills for the digital economy are necessary;

*c)* that the development and improvement of human capacity building and a robust, predictable, enabling regulatory environment will ensure that technological development is sustainable;

*d)* that since 1992 the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector has been supporting countries in their efforts to use telecommunications/ICTs as a catalyst for development, including provision for assistance with capacity building through a variety of initiatives including the ITU Academy;

*e)* the joint campaign of the ITU and the International Labour Organisation “Digital Skills for Jobs”, which aims to equip 5 million young people with job-ready digital skills;

*f)* UNESCO’s ICT Competency Framework for Teachers, which seeks to help countries develop comprehensive national teacher ICT competency policies and standards and integrate these in overarching ICT in education plans;

*g)* that women and girls tend to have less training in STEM subjects than men and are less confident about their abilities; and that women who have some secondary education or have completed secondary school are six times more likely to use the Internet than women with only primary level education or no formal schooling;

*h)* that developing countries face particular challenges in strengthening skills development in areas of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs,

noting

that an inclusive digital society is one where all people regardless of their gender, age, ability, or location, have an equal opportunity to become empowered through ICTs, and that such empowerment and full participation in a digital society is only possible with digital literacy and skills,

is of the view

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

*b)* that education and training in digital skills are critically important in order to foster digital empowerment and inclusion, especially among vulnerable populations such as women and girls, persons with disabilities and specific needs, older persons, youth, indigenous people, and other marginalized communities;

*c)* that Member States, Sector Members and other interested stakeholders should undertake efforts to improve education, training and skills necessary for participating effectively in the digital economy;

*d)* that digital skills are key to leveraging AI, IoT, 5G, Big Data, OTTs, etc. for sustainable development;

invites Member States

1. to promote policies aimed at expanding opportunities and enhancing human potential to leverage telecommunications/ICTs through education, training, and skills development;

2. to take stock of digital skills curricula in education, apprenticeships and other youth and job skills development programs,

3. to collect and share data on developing skills in new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs;

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 build digital skills, especially in developing countries;

2. to integrate digital literacy and digital skill building into an overall approach to education and human resource development;

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

4. encourage investment in quality of teaching, education and training of digital skills, including for women and girls, people with disabilities and specific needs, older persons, youth, indigenous people, and other marginalized communities;

5. to share best practices in digital literacy and digital skills-related education and training programs.

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, including on new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs, to foster sustainable development and digital empowerment and inclusion for all.

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