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| **Informal Experts Group on WTPF-21Sixth meeting – Virtual meeting, 24, 27, 28 September 2021** |  |
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|  | **15 August 2021** |
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| Contribution submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern IrelandPROPOSAL FOR THE TEXT OF NEW DRAFT OPINIONS FOR OPINION 1 BASED ON THE BRAZILIAN CIRCULATED OUTPUT OF INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS ON 29 JULY 2021 |
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The United Kingdom is pleased to submit this contribution with the intention of furthering discussion on Opinion 1 to the sixth meeting of the Informal Expert Group. In the spirit of our productive and ongoing discussions, edits have been proposed using the output document from the 29 July 2021 informal discussion as distributed to the IEG. For ease of tracking edits only, previous suggested edits have been accepted but should not be considered agreed at this time. The UK welcomes further discussion on Opinion 1 at the sixth IEG meeting.

 **[DRAFT OPINION 1: Enabling environment for the development and deployment of telecommunications/ICT connectivity solutions for sustainable development]**

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

 *recalling*

a) UNGA Resolution 74/197, on information and communications technologies for sustainable development;

b) The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda;

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;

f) The UN General Assembly Resolution 75/202 on Information and Communications Technologies for Sustainable Development ;

 *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*, competition, investment, access and inclusion, affordability, resiliency, 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 telecommunication/ICT connectivity solutions for sustainable development ;

d) that the Buenos Aires Declaration adopted by the 2017 World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-17) states “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”;

e) that the strategic plan for the Union for 2020-2023 aims to foster an enabling policy and regulatory environment conducive to sustainable telecommunication/ICT development;

f) that the ITU 2018 report Achieving universal and affordable Internet in the least developed countries notes that an enabling environment for investment and innovation in the broadband market includes “liberalization of the sector, privatization of state-owned national incumbent operators, and separation between policy, regulator and sector operation functions, with a view to encouraging competition and foreign direct investment, and promoting universal access, innovation, content delivery and consumer protection”,

g) the ITU’s SDG Digital Investment Framework: A Whole-of-Government Approach to Investing in Digital Technologies to Achieve the SDGs;

 *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 in telecommunications/ICTs,, should also focus on all stages of development and deployment, including mobilizing for sustainable development at later stages;

c) [That ICT investments, including new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs and complementary access solutions, should be coordinated among sectors and stakeholders to avoid significant fragmentation and duplication of efforts];

d) [that a whole of government approach can play a role in support of a coordinated approach to ICT financing and investments with the aim of is connecting the unconnected and driving development of telecommunications/ICTs 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 telecommunications/ICTs including 5G, AI, IoT, Big Data, and OTT, 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;

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

d) that facilitating investment alongside private sector investment in infrastructure and in rural and remote areas by using targeted government support may be needed where the business case for private investment is otherwise lacking, and in support of affordable connectivity and mobilizing telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development ;

e) that use of such technologies for sustainable development can empower disadvantaged groups, including women, children, youth and older persons/seniors, persons with disabilities, and indigenous groups;

f) that use of such new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs and complementary access solutions 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 new and emerging telecommunications/ICTss is based on transparent, stable, predictable, independent and non-discriminatory policies and regulatory and legal environments that promote innovation and investment, from both public and private sources;

h) that 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 new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs;

 *invites Member States*

1. [to consider how best to foster an enabling environment that is conductive for mobilizing new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development;;]

2. [to consider adopting policies and frameworks that support a transparent, predictable, competitive, independent and non-discriminatory enabling environment;]

2. [ to take a whole of government approach to telecommunications/ICT investments[[1]](#footnote-1), including for investments in new and emerging telecommunications/ICT connectivity solutions to advance sustainable development;]

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

4. [to consider how best to make it easier for the private sector to invest, innovate and upgrade existing networks and to encourage long term and sustained investment in telecommunication/ICT connectivity solutions;]

5. to adopt flexible, streamlined, technology neutral, and innovative spectrum policies to encourage the development and deployment of telecommunications/ICTs ];

6. to foster an awareness of environmental challenges such as climate change and its mitigation in developing policies to advance sustainable development;

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

1. to consider policies that enable the mobilization, including development and deployment, of new and emerging telecommunications/ICT connectivity solutions to advance sustainable development.];

2. [to promote competition and private sector investment, and consider policies and frameworks that take into account evolving business models, and create a fair and conducive enabling environment for stakeholders that allows them to contribute to promoting economic development;]

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

4. [to promote voluntary infrastructure sharing models in order to reduce the costs of investment in telecommunication/ICT connectivity solutions ]]

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

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

7. to encourage the private sector to develop applications and services integrating new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs, taking into account diverse user needs by working with disadvantaged groups, including women, children, youth, older persons/seniors, persons with disabilities, and indigenous groups,;

8. 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;

9. To share best practices regarding the development of enabling environments for investment;

*invites the Secretary-General*

[to continue to strengthen ITU efforts to provide a platform for collaboration and dialogue among key stakeholders, including Member States, the private sector, academia and international funding agencies, to enable them to foster an enabling environment that promotes innovation and investment and advances sustainable development.]

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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)