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**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) on “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”;
- b) UNGA Resolution 72/235 on “Human resources development”;
- c) Geneva Declaration of Principles, adopted by the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in 2003;
- d) the 2005 WSIS outcome documents;
- e) Resolution 71 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (PP) on the “Strategic Plan for the Union for 2020-2023”, *Goal 1 – Growth: Enable and foster access to and increased use of telecommunications/ICT in support of the digital economy and society*”;
- f) Resolution 139 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference on “Use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies to bridge the digital divide and build an inclusive information society”;
- g) Resolution 198 (Rev. Dubai 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference on “Empowerment of youth through telecommunication/information and communication technology”;
- h) Resolution 205 (Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference on “ITU’s role in fostering telecommunication/information and communication technology-centric innovation to support the digital economy and society”;
- i) Resolution 40 (Rev. Buenos Aires 2017) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference on “Group on capacity-building initiatives”,

*considering*

- a) that a lack of digital skills is a barrier to the uptake and effective use of the telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs) including 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, including in new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies, is a fundamental part of an inclusive Information Society and will help promote sustainable development;
- d) that the ITU has been supporting countries in their efforts to use telecommunications/ICTs as a catalyst for development, including provision for assistance with capacity development through a variety of initiatives including the ITU Academy;
- e) that ITU partners with UN organizations, governments, the private sector, international and intergovernmental organizations, civil society, the technical community, academia and other stakeholders to advance programs and initiatives that aim to improve ICT education and equip people, including youth, with digital skills and improve digital literacy;

f) that there is gender and age gap in digital literacy and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education;

g) that developing countries<sup>1</sup> face specific challenges in digital skills development,

*bearing in mind*

a) that the rapid development of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs creates new requirements and expectations on workers;

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*

1. that digital skills in areas such as AI, IoT, 5G, Big Data and OTTs can help to leverage new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies for sustainable development;

2. that policies fostering digital literacy, training and skills development can be instrumental in mobilizing above mentioned technologies for sustainable development;

3. that education and training in digital skills is critically important to reduce the digital gap and promote equal opportunities between countries with different levels of economic and technological development;

4. that education and training in digital skills are also critically important in order to foster digital empowerment and inclusion, especially among marginalised groups and persons with specific needs, including women and girls, children and youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, and indigenous people,

*invites Member States*

1. to collect and share data on the digital literacy and skills required for accessing new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies to advance sustainable development;

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

3. to identify barriers to closing gaps in digital literacy and skills and promote policies aimed at expanding opportunities and building capacities to leverage the abovementioned technologies through education, training and skills development for all,

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

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 the development of ICT and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skills into an overall approach to 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 in areas such as AI, IoT, 5G, Big Data and OTTs, and with emphasis on marginalised groups and persons with specific needs, including women and girls, children and youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, and indigenous people, to promote skills in new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies for sustainable development;

5. to share best practices in digital literacy and digital skills-related education, skills and training programmes among ITU Members,

*invites the Secretary-General*

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<sup>1</sup> These include the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

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 telecommunication/ICT services and technologies, to foster sustainable development and digital empowerment and inclusion for all.

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