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| **Comments C-010-E**  **21 August 2019**  **English only** |
| **Comments submitted by the United States of America**  Comments on the First Draft Outline of the Report by the ITU Secretary-General for the Sixth World Telecommunication/Information and  Communication Technology Policy Forum 2021 |

The United States of America welcomes the opportunity to participate in the Informal Experts Group (IEG) for the sixth World Telecommunication/Information and Communication Technology Policy Forum (WTPF) and to discuss policies for mobilizing new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development. The WTPF is an important venue for exchanging views and information, including on the issues arising from the emergence of new telecommunication/ICT services and technologies.

We applaud the efforts of the Plenipotentiary Conference to encourage broader stakeholder participation in the WTPF and its preparatory process. The Secretary-General’s Report will benefit greatly from multistakeholder participation in the online public consultations, and we look forward to incorporating the views of all interested stakeholders in the work of the IEG. We welcome the continued participation of Sector Members during the WTPF itself, and we strongly encourage the Secretary-General to facilitate participation by the broader stakeholder community, consistent with resolves 10 of Resolution 2 (Rev. Dubai, 2018).

The WTPF theme established by the ITU Council, “Policies for mobilizing new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development,” provides an appropriate and relevant framework for the development of the Secretary-General’s Report and any eventual WTPF outputs. By focusing on policies that support and promote new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs, the WTPF can play an important role in supporting sustainable development and the global transition to the digital economy. We encourage the IEG to work through this framework during the course of the WTPF-21 preparatory process. Working through the framework of the theme established in Council Decision 611 will have benefits for ITU membership and will support broader development goals.

We note with appreciation the first draft of the Secretary-General’s Report, which addresses the possible sub-themes that Council Decision 611 presented for consideration. The Secretary-General’s Report provides an opportunity to consider some of the new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs that can support sustainable development. Nevertheless, the first draft of the Report should adhere more closely to the WTPF theme agreed to by ITU Council. In some cases, the Report focuses too heavily on challenges related to new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs, rather than on the extraordinary benefits to be derived from technological evolution and the solutions that can support their continued growth. Our contribution presents several comments and revisions that align the Report more closely with the WTPF theme.

The United States is proposing additional topics that should be included in the Secretary-General’s Report, particularly mobilizing new solutions for connectivity – to connect the unconnected – and a stronger focus on best practices for creating an enabling policy environment for new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs. We also are continuing to consider additional topics that might be appropriate for inclusion in the Report, which we could provide in future revisions.

Resolution 2 specifies that the WTPF shall adopt opinions by consensus. In that regard, the IEG should not necessarily recommend an opinion to the WTPF on every sub-theme articulated in the Report, and should focus on those topics where there is broad agreement. For example, we are concerned that some of the sub-themes included in the first draft of the Report, most notably artificial intelligence (AI) and big data, are the subject of longstanding contentious debates and unlikely to yield consensus among the IEG. Therefore, the United States does not support presenting AI and big data as stand-alone sub-themes. Instead, we believe AI and big data should be incorporated into other sections of the Report in a way that aligns more closely with the theme agreed by Council. Our contribution reflects that approach by incorporating AI and big data into other sections of the report, thereby focusing on policies to mobilize new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs to enable big data and AI applications for sustainable development. We encourage the IEG to support this approach, which we believe will lead to a more successful WTPF.

The United States looks forward to working with all participants at the IEG meeting in September and at subsequent meetings leading up to the sixth WTPF in 2021.