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| WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SOCIETY DAY | |

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| Summary  Indian Administration acknowledges the celebration of world Telecommunication and information Society Day 2022 on the theme “**Digital technologies for Older Persons and Healthy Ageing**”.  The WTISD commemorates founding of ITU. It also strives to spread awareness on the importance of Information and Communication Technologies to empower people and society's economic verticals. Bridging the digital divide in different forms, is one of the key objectives of international telecommunication Union across the countries and communities. The Council document (C22/17) proposes the theme, “Digital Technologies for Road Safety” for WTISD 2023, an important topic for consideration.  However, it may also be recalled that the United Nations has recognized least developed countries (LDCs) as a category of States since 1971 and it is over 50 years since its categorization. There are quite a few important resolutions and efforts to bridge digital divide with focus on Least Developed Countries and other category of countries to proliferate broadband services.  Action required  The Council is requested to **consider** the theme, “**Empowering the least developed countries through Information and Communication Technologies**” for WTISD 2023.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  References  Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries); UNGA Resolution [60/252](https://www.itu.int/en/wtisd/Pages/res60-252.aspx): 60/252 - World Summit on the Information Society, 27 April 2006; Plenipotentiary Conference (PP) Resolutions [30 (Rev. Dubai, 2018)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-030-E.pdf), [140 (Rev. Dubai, 2018)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-140-E.pdf), [198 (Rev. Dubai, 2018)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-198-E.pdf), [71 (Rev. Dubai, 2018)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-071-E.pdf); other Conference resolutions and documents. |

# 1. Background

1.1 *World Telecommunication and Information Society Day* *is being celebrated* annually on 17 May marking the date of the founding of ITU and the signing of the first International Telegraph Convention in 1865, focus global attention annually on bringing the enormous benefits of the digital revolution in ICTs to the world’s inhabitants,

1.2 The ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in November 2006 welcomed the General Assembly’s decision and amended [Resolution 68](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-068-E.pdf) to invite the Council to adopt a specific theme for each *World Telecommunication and Information Society Day*.

2. World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2023

2.1 It has been a journey of 50 years since recognition of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) as a category by the UN to provide special impetus for development since 1971. LDCs have been recognized as a category of States that are deemed highly disadvantaged in their development process, for structural, historical and also geographical reasons. Currently, the 46 LDCs comprise around 880 million people, 12 percent of the world population, which face severe structural impediments to growth. However, the LDCs account for less than 2 percent of world GDP and around 1 percent of world trade. Six countries have so far graduated from LDC status (UNCTAD).

2.2 Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (2011) (A/Conf.219/3/Rev.1) emphasized the challenge of lack of adequate ICT infrastructure, *inter alia*. It also mentioned about lagging behind in critical areas, with focus on, “Acquiring new technologies and building domestic capacity and a knowledge base to be able to fully utilize acquired technologies and promoting indigenous capacity on a sustainable basis for research and development are needed to enhance productive capacities in least developed countries”.

2.3 Several ITU resolutions including that of Plenipotentiary conference, WTDC, Council, programs and the multi stakeholder alliance launched by ITU in close cooperation with UN (Partner2Connect Digital Coalition), focus on enhanced digital cooperation to address the challenges and gaps in LDCs.

2.4 The ITU report on “Connectivity in the Least Developed Countries: Status report 2021”, highlights several challenges and a few are captured below:

* Vast digital divide among LDCs.
* Only two LDCs have met SDG Target 9.c in regard to universality and affordability (deadline originally set for end of 2020)
* Persistent usage gap
* Lack of awareness
* Lack of digital skills
* Challenges to make productive use of broadband technologies
* Significant gaps in data infrastructure

2.5 Taking note of 50 years of journey, it is an opportunity and urgency to spread awareness on challenges yet to be addressed in the current group of LDCs seeking enabling more enhanced cooperation and also to celebrate the empowering role of ICTs to complement the progress of LDCs in their graduation.

2.6 The theme is in line with the ITU and UN’s special efforts to bridge global digital divide and as well within the WSIS action lines.

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