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| **Agenda item: PL 2** | **Document C23/49-E** |
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| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| COLLABORATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL PROCESSES, INCLUDING ON STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT | |
| **Purpose**  This report presents some highlights of ITU’s contributions to and engagement in major United Nations conferences, processes and workstreams on digital themes, including aspects of the United Nations Secretary-General’s report “Our Common Agenda”. A more comprehensive description is found in the information document on collaboration with the United Nations system.  **Action required by the Council**  The ITU Council is invited **to note** this report.  **Relevant link(s) with the Strategic Plan**  [Resolution 71 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022](https://www.itu.int/en/council/planning/Documents/Res71-PP2-final.pdf)) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, including Annex 2 thereto and in particular § 72 of the strategic plan and §§ 1-6 of Annex 2.  **Financial implications**  None.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  Documents [C08/INF/8](http://www.itu.int/md/S08-CL-INF-0008/en), [C11/INF/6](http://www.itu.int/md/S11-CL-INF-0006/en), [C12/INF/1(Rev.1)](http://www.itu.int/md/S12-CL-INF-0001/en), [C13/INF/10](http://www.itu.int/md/S13-CL-INF-0010/en), [C14/INF/7](http://www.itu.int/md/S14-CL-INF-0007/en), [C15/INF/4](http://www.itu.int/md/S15-CL-INF-0004/en), [C16/57](http://www.itu.int/md/S16-CL-C-0057/en), and [C17/INF/10](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-INF-0010/en), [C18/INF/4](https://www.itu.int/md/S18-CL-INF-0004/en), [C19/INF/8](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-INF-0008/en), [C20/INF/3](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-INF-0003/en); [C21/INF/2](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-INF-0002/en); [C22/INF/2](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CL-INF-0002/en); [C23/INF/9](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-INF-0009/en) | |

1. **Introduction**

1.1 As digital technology continues to play an increasingly crucial role in transforming global economic and social activities, maximizing the benefits and addressing the challenges of the digital agenda have emerged as shared interests and priorities across the entire United Nations system and have remained a top priority of the United Nations Secretary-General. As information and communication technologies (ICTs) are recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a key means of implementation, this evolution within the United Nations system has resulted in the emergence of multiple workstreams on digital cooperation, as well as growing attention on digital issues in major United Nations conferences and processes. As the United Nations specialized agency for ICTs, ITU actively collaborates and engages with, and participates in, various processes, mechanisms and coordination networks within the United Nations system, in addition to making contributions to various joint or inter-agency initiatives. Furthermore, in leveraging its expertise and extensive experience in telecommunications/ICTs, ITU demonstrates proactive leadership in addressing digital subjects and the digital agenda, including but not limited to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), within the framework of the United Nations system.

1. **Our Common Agenda**

2.1 ITU is contributing to both United Nations Member States’ and inter-agency efforts to follow up on the United Nations Secretary-General’s report “[Our Common Agenda](https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common_Agenda_Report_English.pdf)” (OCA), which was presented to the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2021. In response to UNGA Resolution 75/1, on the declaration on the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, the OCA report includes proposals for, *inter alia*, a Global Digital Compact and a Summit of the Future with a possible digital track, as well as many other proposals with a digital dimension, including on transforming education, outer space and a United Nations 2.0.

2.2 According to UNGA Resolution 76/307, on modalities for the Summit of the Future, the summit is scheduled to take place in September 2024 and will be preceded by a ministerial meeting on 21 September 2023. The Summit of the Future in 2024 will adopt the outcome document “A Pact for the Future”, which will be agreed on in advance by consensus through an intergovernmental process, facilitated by the co-facilitators of Germany and Namibia.

2.3 **Global Digital Compact:** In the OCA report, the Global Digital Compact (GDC) is the major proposal for addressing digital issues and is intended to outline shared principles for an open, free and secure digital future for all. It suggests addressing several digital issues, including digital connectivity, avoiding Internet fragmentation, protecting data, upholding human rights online, promoting a trustworthy Internet, regulating artificial intelligence and promoting digital commons, which are proposed for inclusion in the GDC, to be agreed at the Summit of the Future in September 2024.

2.4 As a member of the United Nations core inter-agency group on the GDC, convened by the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General’s Envoy on Technology (OSET), ITU has committed to supporting and participating in the consultation process to contribute to the development of the GDC. ITU has thus actively participated in a series of intergovernmental processes, organized by the co-facilitators of Rwanda and Sweden, and made relevant interventions throughout GDC consultations, including a keynote message from the Secretary-General on digital connectivity and inclusion in one GDC thematic deep-dive consultation and statements in several other GDC thematic deep-dive consultations. In addition, to support the Member State process, ITU hosted roundtable events in Geneva for the co-facilitators during WSIS Forum 2023 and leveraged ITU communications channels to raise awareness of the opportunities to contribute to the GDC online consultation and to participate in the co-facilitators’ consultations.

2.5 ITU also contributed to the preparation of [the United Nations Secretary-General’s Policy Brief on the GDC](https://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?OpenAgent&DS=A/77/CRP.1/ADD.4&Lang=E), which was released on 24 May 2023 and presented to Member States on 5 June. The policy brief makes recommendations to Member States, cites ITU data and proposes a role for ITU and ITU initiatives (recognizing ITU’s leadership on Giga and Partner2Connect) and the engagement of ITU Sector Members in GDC implementation. In addition, ITU submitted its [own inputs](https://www.un.org/techenvoy/sites/www.un.org.techenvoy/files/GDC-submission_ITU.pdf) to the online consultation hosted by OSET based on valuable discussions held during key events, such as the consultations during the 2022 Plenipotentiary Conference and Ministerial Roundtable in Bucharest, the 2022 World Telecommunication Development Conference in Kigali and WSIS Forum 2023 in Geneva, as well as the outcomes of the last World Telecommunication Policy Forum and relevant Plenipotentiary Conference resolutions. The full list of written submissions made by stakeholders to the online GDC consultation process is [here](https://www.un.org/techenvoy/global-digital-compact/submissions). Further information about the GDC and relevant documents is available [here](https://www.un.org/techenvoy/global-digital-compact). The next steps in the GDC process include the development of an issues paper during June-August 2023, based on the co-facilitated consultations, followed by its presentation to the ministerial meeting for the Summit of the Future on 21 September 2023. United Nations Member States are expected to begin negotiations on the GDC late in 2023, continuing through to the second quarter of 2024, with a view to adoption of the GDC at the Summit of the Future.

2.6 **Outer space:** The OCA report calls for a multistakeholder dialogue on outer space, as part of the Summit of the Future, seeking high-level political agreement on the peaceful, secure and sustainable use of outer space, the move towards a global regime to coordinate space traffic and principles for the future governance of outer space activities. ITU has been invited by the United Nations Secretary-General as a member of the United Nations core inter-agency group on outer space to support preparations for such a dialogue and contribute to the [United Nations Secretary-General’s Policy Brief on Outer Space](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-outer-space-en.pdf), which was released on 29 May 2023. The policy brief emphasizes challenges and ambitious yet reasonable actions, and ITU, including in relation to the World Radiocommunication Conference, is mentioned multiple times as an organization capable of international cooperation on outer space sustainability issues.

2.7 **Transforming education:** Another initiative mentioned in the OCA report was the convening by the United Nations Secretary-General of the [Transforming Education Summit (TES)](https://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit) in September 2022 in New York, aimed at raising awareness of the global education crisis, elevating education to the top of the global political agenda and mobilizing action, ambition, solidarity and solutions to recover pandemic-related learning losses and sow the seeds to transform education in a rapidly changing world. ITU played an active role in the preparation of TES, contributing to the TES Advisory Committee and United Nations Task Team, proposing the development of standards to facilitate interchangeable curricula and educational data exchange systems, and urging countries to commit to providing high-quality digital learning opportunities for all. ITU also seconded a staff member to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to support the preparatory process and the summit itself. In the follow-up to TES, ITU was part of the core inter-agency group, convened by the Executive Office of the United Nations Secretary-General (EOSG) to support the drafting of the policy brief. Currently, ITU is continuing to engage with the TES team, led by the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General and UNESCO, leveraging the Giga initiative to connect all schools to the Internet and provide learners with access to information, opportunity and choice.

2.8 **Summit of the Future:** Alongside the OCA proposals dedicated to digital issues, there are others that touch on digital issues, including those on youth, future generations, beyond GDP, gender, jobs and social protection, and the new agenda for peace, to which ITU has also been actively contributing, raising awareness of existing work to avoid duplication. In addition, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, chaired by the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, created an OCA working group, in which the ITU Deputy Secretary-General has been participating. The OCA policy briefs have also been discussed in the United Nations Secretary-General’s Deputies Committee and Executive Committee, to which the ITU Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General have been invited as guest participants for relevant agenda items. The policy briefs are being published by the United Nations [here](https://www.un.org/en/common-agenda/policy-briefs).

2.9 **High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism:** Another major OCA proposal pertains to [the United Nations Secretary-General’s High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism (HLAB)](https://highleveladvisoryboard.org/breakthrough/), on which ITU is also actively following up. In April 2023, HLAB published its report “[A Breakthrough for People and Planet: Effective and Inclusive Global Governance for Today and the Future](https://www.highleveladvisoryboard.org/breakthrough/pdf/56892_UNU_HLAB_report_Final_LOWRES.pdf)”, outlining a plan to strengthen global architecture for peace, security and finance, deliver just transition for climate and digitalization, and ensure more equity and fairness in global decision-making. Notably, it includes a chapter on digital and data governance, which advocates for a just digital transition that maximizes the value of data while safeguarding against digital harm.

2.10 As strongly suggested by Member States during the Council Working Group for the strategic and financial plans, ITU has worked, and will continue to work, very closely with EOSG, OSET and other United Nations agencies on the acceleration of digital cooperation and digital issues in the OCA report and in support of Member States in the lead-up to the Summit of the Future in September 2024.

1. **LDC5 Conference and LLDCs and SIDS processes**

3.1 The [5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5)](https://www.un.org/ldc5/) took place in two parts. The first part was held in New York on 17 March 2022, at which the [Doha Programme of Action](https://www.un.org/ldc5/sites/www.un.org.ldc5/files/doha_booklet-web.pdf) was adopted, followed by the second part in Doha, Qatar, on 5-9 March 2023. LDC5 revolved around the theme “From Potential to Prosperity” and aimed to drive transformational change to improve the lives of the 1.2 billion people who live in the 46 least developed countries (LDCs). ITU's contributions in terms of universal and meaningful connectivity and sustainable digital transformation for LDCs were among the key themes of the conference, including main programme activities, such as the High-level Thematic Roundtable 2, on leveraging the power of science, technology and innovation for the sustainable development of LDCs, and the Private Sector Forum connectivity track, in which the Secretary-General had prominent speaking roles.

3.2 The LDC5 general debate, in which ITU delivered a statement, included the following key messages: broadband infrastructure investment is key for LDCs to reap economic gains; and ending the digital divide as the world moves increasingly online is critical. ITU hosted/co-hosted side events on digital transformation for LDCs and the Secretary-General also spoke at side events on other digital issues and engaged in youth events, while the BDT Director participated in the Ministerial Meeting on South-South Cooperation and spoke at multiple side events. Furthermore, an ITU [publication](https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/facts-figures-for-ldc/) “Facts and Figures: Focus on Least Developed Countries” was released, further supporting LDC5’s objectives and [outcomes](https://www.un.org/ldc5/sites/www.un.org.ldc5/files/doha_booklet-web.pdf).

3.3 A Partner2Connect (P2C) side event, co-chaired by ITU and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed, Landlocked and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) took place to highlight P2C pledges made to LDCs and provided an opportunity for new LDC-related pledges to be announced.

3.4 UN-OHRLLS has already approached ITU about making similar thematic contributions to the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries and the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States, given the importance of universal meaningful connectivity and sustainable digital transformation to these groups of countries.

**4. Commission on the Status of Women**

4.1 The [67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67)](https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw67-2023) was held in New York on 6-17 March 2023. Notably, it marked the first time the Commission had focused on the theme of innovation, technological change and education in the digital age. The [agreed conclusions](https://www.undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=E%2FCN.6%2F2023%2FL.3&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False), which are the outcomes of the Commission, brought forward a vision of a more equal and connected world, recognizing that equality and meaningful youth engagement require digital access, digital literacy and digital safety for all.

4.2 ITU actively engaged in numerous activities throughout CSW67, with the Secretary-General delivering speeches in a ministerial session and at the official United Nations International Women’s Day event, as well as at several high-level side events. In addition, ITU and its regional offices provided valuable contributions and inputs during preparations for CSW67 at both the global and regional levels, including the Africa and Asia and Pacific regions.

1. **Collaboration with OHCHR**

5.1 In July 2021, the United Nations Human Rights Council in [Resolution 47/23](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G21/192/18/PDF/G2119218.pdf?OpenElement) mandated the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) “to convene two expert consultations, to discuss the relationship between human rights and technical standard-setting processes for new and emerging digital technologies and the practical application of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to the activities of technology companies, and to submit a report thereon, reflecting the discussions held in an inclusive and comprehensive manner, to the Human Rights Council at its fiftieth and fifty-third sessions”. The resolution also requested OHCHR to seek input from and to take into account relevant work being done by stakeholders, including ITU.

5.2 To this end, the international standards-development organizations (SDOs), including ITU, the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), are working closely with OHCHR. At the recent World Standards Cooperation (WSC) meeting, hosted by ITU in February 2023, the key outcome was an agreement among the three international SDOs, IEC, ISO and ITU, in the presence of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to foster greater collaboration between standardization and human rights communities.

5.3 In addition, ITU participated in an open consultation organized by OHCHR at the Internet Governance Forum 2022, as well as at the second OHCHR expert consultation in February 2023. ITU and OHCHR also co-organized a [session](https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2023/en/Agenda/Session/368) on technical standards and human rights at WSIS Forum 2023, and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr Volker Türk, was invited to address the WSC meeting hosted by ITU in February 2023.

**6. SDG Summit and SDG Digital Day**

6.1 On 18-19 September, the United Nations will convene the SDG Summit marking the halfway point in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Digital is expected to be a key theme in helping to rescue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On 17 September, ITU and the United Nations Development Programme, in collaboration with the United Nations system, will convene SDG Digital Day in New York. SDG Digital Day will take stock of the achievements and gaps in delivering the 2030 Agenda and catalyse greater action on the SDGs by bringing the potential of data and digital technologies to the fore.

6.2 SDG Digital Day will contribute to the objectives of the SDG Summit by:

* **Demonstrating** how data and digital technologies can be leveraged to accelerate progress towards the SDGs and their targets, including by taking stock of the current situation, challenges and opportunities. The outcome of this analysis will be summarized in the “SDG Digital Rescue Plan”,[[1]](#footnote-1) which will be launched on the day.
* **Showcasing** high-impact, sustainable, digitally based solutions with game-changing potential to accelerate progress on the SDGs through the application of a common foundational framework for digital transformation that can be applied at the national level.
* **Mobilizing** new commitments for the SDGs, supported by data and digital technologies from governments, business, civil society, academia and other sectors, leveraging the [P2C](https://www.itu.int/partner2connect-pledges/) online pledging platform.
* **Providing clear pathways** to scale collaboration and transformative action by catalysing further partnerships and better coordination of resources.
* **Engaging youth** as both solution-providers and solution-partners to win the SDG race.

6.3 SDG Digital Day will be co-led by Member States, SDG advocates and P2C champions and will be developed and delivered in partnership with agencies from across the United Nations system, and with the support of the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) as our SDG Digital Day knowledge partner.

6.4 SDG Digital Day will target participants of UNGA but will also be open to external participants, including other international organizations and United Nations agencies, P2C Digital Coalition participants, commissioners of the ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, WSIS members, the Generation Connect community, development organizations, and private-sector stakeholders, as well as civil society, youth and academic leaders. Some 300 physical participants and a similar number of online participants are expected to join.

6.5 The 2023 session of the [High-Level Political Forum](https://hlpf.un.org/2023) on Sustainable Development in July is expected to support the mid-term review of the implementation of the SDGs and the preparations for the 2023 SDG Summit. It will also perform an in-depth review of **Goal 6, on clean water and sanitation, Goal 7, on affordable and clean energy, Goal 9, on industry, innovation and infrastructure, Goal 11, on sustainable cities and communities, and Goal 17, on partnerships for the goals.**

1. **UNFCC process and COP28** 
   1. ITU, together with partners across the United Nations system, governments, business and civil society, will convene a Green Digital Action track in support of the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which will take place in Dubai from 30 November to 12 December 2023. The Green Digital Action track is part of a wider initiative bringing the ICT community together in the lead-up to COP28 to mobilize and launch new commitments and bold action to accelerate the twin green and digital transitions by governments, business and civil society and others, and to catalyse opportunities for partnerships and broader coordination of resources in collaboration with key existing mechanisms, such as WSC, the United Nations Early Warnings For All initiative and the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition.
2. **Conclusion**

8.1 The digital agenda has continued to grow at United Nations headquarters in New York and across the whole system more broadly. A survey conducted by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and OSET in early 2022 identified more than 500 digital initiatives across the United Nations. This number is likely to have further expanded since then. Moreover, digital themes are more present in major United Nations conferences and are appearing in more United Nations Secretary-General reports, resolutions and outcome documents. This report has shared some highlights of ITU’s recent contributions to and engagement in United Nations conferences, processes and workstreams. More detail can be found in the information document on collaboration with the United Nations system. Demand and opportunities for ITU’s contributions and collaboration are expected to continue to grow.

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1. This is a working title only; the final title is still to be determined. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)