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| STRENGTHENING SUBMARINE CABLE RESILIENCE – THE INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY BODY ON SUBMARINE CABLE RESILIENCE AND THE 2025 ABUJA SUMMIT |
| **Purpose**This document provides an update on the International Advisory Body for submarine cable resilience established by the ITU and the International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC), and the [2025 International Submarine Cable Resilience Summit](https://www.itu.int/digital-resilience/submarine-cables/events/about-nigeria-summit/) hosted by Nigeria in Abuja on 26 and 27 February 2025.**Action required by the Council**The Council is invited to **note** this document**.** |

# 1 Introduction

1.1 Submarine telecommunications cables are the lifeline and backbone of the global digital economy, enabling communication, commerce, governance, healthcare, and education. These cables facilitate over 99% of international data exchange.

1.2 However, their vulnerability to human activities, such as fishing and anchoring, natural disasters, and aging infrastructure, poses systemic risks. In 2024 alone, over 200 cable faults disrupted connectivity for billions, costing economies dearly during major outages.

# 2 The International Advisory Body on submarine cable resilience

2.1 The [International Advisory Body on Submarine Cable Resilience](https://www.itu.int/digital-resilience/submarine-cables/advisory-body/) (hereinafter the “Advisory Body”), was established by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in partnership with the International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC) in November 2024, with the aim of promoting dialogue and collaboration on potential ways and means to improve the resilience of this vital infrastructure that powers global communications and the digital economy. The Advisory Body, co-chaired by H.E. Bosun Tijani, Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and Prof. Sandra Maximiano, Chair of the Board of Directors of the National Communications Authority of the Republic of Portugal (ANACOM), aims to address ways to improve, *inter alia*, cable maintenance, prevent damage from natural hazards and accidental human activities, ensure faster recovery times after disruptions, increase redundancy and promote sustainable practices in the industry.

2.2 With an initial term of two years, the Advisory Body comprises 42 leaders and experts from the public and private sectors, including representatives from submarine cable operators, telecommunications companies, government agencies, maritime authorities, and international organizations, as well as relevant UN agencies that are serving as advisors.

2.3 The Advisory Body was established through an open process, where all stakeholders, including Member States, industry stakeholders, academic entities, and other relevant entities, were invited to express their interest in participating. The aim was to ensure diverse voices to address the complex issues of submarine cable resilience from multiple perspectives, ensuring that solutions are comprehensive and globally applicable.

2.4 Members were selected on the basis of their expertise and role in relevant areas such as submarine cable technology and associated markets, telecommunications policy, law and digital infrastructure. Criteria also included geographical diversity, representation of the public and private sectors, and commitment to the Advisory Body's mission.

2.5 The Advisory Body will meet at least twice per year. The first virtual meeting of the Advisory Body took place in December 2024, and the first in-person meeting of the Advisory Body was held on the sidelines of the International Submarine Cable Resilience Summit 2025 held in Abuja, Nigeria, on 26-27 February 2025.

2.6 The Advisory Body, at its meeting during the Abuja Summit, agreed to create working groups focused on risk identification, monitoring and mitigation, as well as connectivity and geographic diversity of landing points and routes, and timely deployment and repair of cables.

# 3 International Submarine Cable Resilience Summit 2025, Abuja, Nigeria

3.1 On 26-27 February 2025, Nigeria's Ministry of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy hosted the Summit that convened over 250 governments, industry leaders and experts to address ways to enhance the resilience of telecommunication submarine cables in order to safeguard our digital future.

3.2 The concluding Summit Declaration (set out in [Annex A](#AnnexA)), developed by the Advisory Body, includes a commitment to international efforts to reinforce submarine telecommunications cable resilience, centered on actions ranging from increased cooperation to technical advancements. The key focus areas are mitigating risks to submarine cables, accelerating repairs, and bridging connectivity gaps in underserved regions.

# 4 Next steps

4.1 The Advisory Body is in the process of setting up the three working groups. The nomination process has concluded, and the groups will start their work in early June 2025. These working groups, with a total of 165 expert members nominated by governments, industry, academia, and international organizations, represent a diverse cross-section of global stakeholders. Each working group is co-led by two appointed facilitators and will work on developing various deliverables by early 2026. These potentially include best practices, case studies and other deliverables aimed at enhancing the resilience of submarine cable infrastructure worldwide.

***Annex:*** *1*

ANNEX A

Abuja Declaration on submarine cable resilience

The International Advisory Body on Submarine Cable Resilience Declaration (agreed by the International Advisory Body on Submarine Cable Resilience on 26 February 2025), Abuja, Nigeria

We, the members of the International Advisory Body on Submarine Cable Resilience, recognize the vital role of submarine telecommunications cables in enabling global connectivity, empowering economic growth, and supporting digital transformation. They are critical infrastructure and should be respected in accordance with international law.

In the spirit of collaboration and shared understanding, we adopt this Declaration as a framework for fostering resilience and encouraging cooperative efforts to support this vital infrastructure.

# 1 Acknowledging vital infrastructure

We recognize the essential role that submarine telecommunications cables play as criticalinfrastructure in enabling global economic, social, and governmental activity throughinterconnected communication systems by carrying over 99% of intercontinental data traffic.

# 2 Strengthening cable protection through risk mitigation

We underscore the importance of identifying and mitigating a range of risks to submarinecable systems, including natural events and accidental maritime damage, through the timelyexchange of pertinent information, knowledge and best practices as well as enhancedcooperation between government agencies and all relevant stakeholders. We encouragepromotion of sufficient and necessary mitigation and recovery measures to reduce the scale and scope of cable damage.

# 3 Promoting diverse routes and landings to enhance resilience and continuity

Considering that submarine telecommunications cables are crucial to the digital ecosystemfrom strategic, economic, safety, security, and strategic autonomy perspectives, weencourage the development of geographically diversified infrastructure, through all possiblefunding approaches including Public-Private-Partnerships, to mitigate potential disruptions,increase resilience, maintain connectivity, and ensure no region is left isolated.

# 4 Facilitating timely deployment and repair

We encourage the development of government policies and practices to expedite the deployment of new submarine cable systems, ensure the maintenance and timely repair of damaged cables, to promote streamlined permits processes, maintain stockpiles/spares, and further support the development of the submarine cable installation and repair ecosystem.

# 5 Promoting global cooperation

We encourage international cooperation among governments, national regulatory authorities, research centres, universities, industry stakeholders, international organizations and other stakeholders to address shared challenges and support the continuous operation of submarine cable networks.

# 6 Advancing sustainable approaches

We uphold international law, and promote best practice principles and multistakeholder coordination on submarine communication cables. We support the adoption of physical risk-based planning and environmentally sustainable practices informed by the best available science in the planning, deployment, and maintenance of submarine cables, ensuring the responsible management of natural and marine environments.

# 7 Fostering technological innovation

We highlight the value of innovative technologies and solutions that can mitigate the risks of damage to and enhance the resilience and efficiency of submarine cable systems, to ensure they remain operational, robust and reliable.

# 8 Facilitating capacity building

We advocate for the development of knowledge-sharing platforms and training programs to enhance the ability of all nations, particularly developing countries, to manage protect and repair submarine cable systems effectively and efficiently.

# 9 Preparing for future and present connectivity needs

Recognizing the rapid growth in global data transmission and the reliance of the entire digital ecosystem on such connectivity, we support efforts to ensure that submarine cable infrastructure can meet the demands of an accessible, stable and open digital future, and address the current digital divide, inter alia, through investment in new cable systems, upgrades to existing routes, and improved capacity planning.

# 10 Encouraging proactive risk awareness

We encourage regular risk assessments and cooperative approaches among all relevant stakeholders, including governments, cable operators, system suppliers, and maintenance providers, to identify and address risks and challenges in submarine cable systems, contributing to greater resilience and preparedness for the long term.

# 11 Using data for informed decisions

We underline the importance of using data-driven and evidence-based approaches, including the analysis of cable routes, natural hazard risks, maritime activities and resources, to develop repair capabilities, guide decision-making and prioritize areas requiring additional focus.

Through this Declaration, we reaffirm our shared vision of collaboration, innovation, and sustainability, ensuring that submarine cables continue to play a vital role in global connectivity and development.

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