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| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| BROADBAND COMMISSION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT | |
| **Purpose**  The objective of this document is to provide information on the ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development activities.  **Action required**  The Council Working Group on WSIS and the SDGs is invited to **note** the document.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  [*CWG-WSIS&SDG website*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Pages/default.aspx)*;* [*Broadband Commission website*](https://broadbandcommission.org)*;* [*The State of Broadband Report 2024*](https://www.broadbandcommission.org/publication/state-of-broadband-2024/)*;* [*7 Advocacy Targets 2025*](https://www.broadbandcommission.org/advocacy-targets/) | |

Overview

The Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development was established in 2010 by ITU and UNESCO with the aim of boosting the importance of broadband on the international policy agenda and expanding broadband access in every country as key to accelerating progress towards national and international development targets.

In May 2010, the ITU and UNESCO established the [Broadband Commission for Digital Development](https://www.broadbandcommission.org) in response to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon’s call to step up UN efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Since its inception, the Commission has been co-chaired by H.E. President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Mr Carlos Slim Helú of Mexico, with the ITU Secretary-General and UNESCO Director-General as Co-Vice-Chairs. The Commission comprises around 50 Commissioners who represent a cross-cutting group of top CEO and industry leaders, senior policymakers and regulators, and heads of international agencies, with academia and organizations concerned with development including civil society, foundations, NGOs, non-profits.

The Commission constitutes a unique multistakeholder high-level platform of the most influential ICT advocates and serves as the public-private partnership fostering digital cooperation and developing actionable recommendations for achieving universal connectivity.

Advocacy and thought leadership

The Commission leverages the strength of its membership and collective expertise to advocate for meaningful, safe, secure, and sustainable broadband communications services as a foundational element to achieving the 2030 Agenda.

The Commission is pioneering and leading knowledge products on ICTs and SDGs and has a proven model for collaborative and consensus-driven outcomes done by multi-stakeholder membership including:

– Over **40 Working Group** outcomes on digital development with some 300+ collaboratively developed recommendations issued. These recommended actions are addressed to each group of digital ecosystem stakeholders.

– **14 editions of the Annual State of Broadband Reports** that analyze global connectivity challenges and successes, and track progress toward achieving its [7 Advocacy Targets](https://www.broadbandcommission.org/advocacy-targets/) with more than 70 unique recommendations and conclusions developed by consensus by its members spanning different categories like policy and regulations, funding and investment, environmental/social and governance issues, entrepreneurship and inclusion.

The Commission has also been instrumental in launching a number of global initiatives (EQUALS, Giga, etc.) and advocating with its educational campaigns (MSMEs day, SDG Digital, etc.), events (WSIS, STI Forum, LDC5, UNCTAD e-week, etc.)  and inputs to various UN processes.

The State of Broadband annual report

Every year, the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development publishes its flagship [annual 'State of Broadband’ report](https://broadbandcommission.org/state-of-broadband-archive/) providing a unique, global snapshot of global progress on reaching universal connectivity.

The [State of Broadband 2024](https://www.broadbandcommission.org/publication/state-of-broadband-2024/), titled “Leveraging AI for Universal Connectivity”, was released in June 2024 and offered an initial overview of how AI applications are already shaping development across various fields such as e-government, education, digital health, digital finance, and the environment, while also addressing associated risks and implications for the digital divide and the Commission’s 2025 Advocacy Targets.

Key messages

– The Commission views AI as a potential accelerant towards sustainable development goals, highlighting the need for further exploration into AI’s potential impact and issues.

– Policymaking in relation to AI is rapidly evolving, with countries and regions beginning to establish guidelines or regulations to balance AI’s benefits against its risks, although comprehensive policy responses by a large number of countries and normative recommendations are still under development.

– There are initiatives underway to explore and implement AI by a number of separate Commissioner organizations and companies, and the report presents some of these initiatives.

– AI is transforming economic activities, sectors, and various aspects of life, presenting both advantages like efficiency and speed, and challenges such as increased energy consumption and the reinforcement of biases.

– Despite substantive progress in some areas, the Broadband Commission’s targets have still not been achieved.

The State of Broadband also provided recommendations on ways to achieve the Commission's advocacy targets.

The Working Group on “Data Governance in the Digital Age: Policies for a sustainable, equitable and inclusive future”

In the context the rapidly evolving digital age and the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), given also a fragmentation of data governance frameworks across nations, data governance has become a crucial element for harnessing the transformative potential of data while addressing associated risks. Recognizing these challenges, the Global Digital Compact advocates for advancing responsible, equitable, and interoperable data governance approaches.

The Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development launched a Working Group on “[Data Governance in the Digital Age](https://www.broadbandcommission.org/working-groups/data-governance/)” in the spring of 2024, co-chaired by UNESCO, ITU, UNDP and the African Union Commission. This group focuses on creating forward-thinking policy solutions for governing data in the context of a digital and AI revolution. Additionally, it aims to support policymakers and regulators by providing the necessary capacity and tools to effectively navigate the complexities of data governance.

The effectiveness of the Working Group is underpinned by the diverse expertise within the Broadband Commission members –Commissioners from a variety of sectors– including government, civil society, academia, and the private sector as well as external experts who offer valuable insights and expertise.

The Working Group aims to develop thought leadership, policy guidance, and practical toolkits to support governments and policymakers in navigating and building capacity in data governance. The group also aims to support regional, international, and global data governance efforts that align with and complement various ongoing initiatives.

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