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| **8 August 2025** |
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| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| UPDATES ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE BROADBAND COMMISSION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT | |
| **Purpose**  The objective of this document is to provide information on the ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development’s latest activities.  **Action required**  The Council Working Group on WSIS and the SDGs is invited to **note** this 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 – 2025*](https://www.broadbandcommission.org/publication/state-of-broadband-2025/)*;* [*7 Advocacy Targets 2025*](https://www.broadbandcommission.org/advocacy-targets/) | |

Overview

[The Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development](https://broadbandcommission.org/) 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://broadbandcommission.org/our-history/) 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 Helù of Mexico, with the ITU Secretary-General and UNESCO Director-General as co-Vice Chairs. The Commission comprises approximately 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 broadband development, including civil society, foundations, NGOs, and non-profit organizations.

The Commission constitutes a unique multistakeholder high-level platform of the most influential ICT advocates and serves as the public-private partnership fostering international 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 **35 Working Group** outcomes on digital development with over 300 collaboratively developed recommendations issued. These recommended actions are tailored to each group of digital ecosystem stakeholders.

– **15 State of Broadband reports**, offering a comprehensive overview of progress and challenges in broadband connectivity, and proposing solutions to close connectivity gaps. [These annual reports](https://broadbandcommission.org/state-of-broadband-archive/) 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, including policy and regulation, funding and investment, environmental/social and governance issues, entrepreneurship and inclusion.

The Commission has also been instrumental in catalyzing a number of global initiatives (e.g. EQUALS, Giga, the [Child Online Safety Universal Declaration](http://broadbandcommission.org/publication/child-online-safety-declaration/)) and advocating its educational campaigns (e.g. MSMEs day, SDG Digital, etc.) at events (e.g. WSIS Forum, STI Forum, LDC5, UNCTAD e-week, etc.) and contributing 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. It is written collectively, uniting the knowledge and wisdom of the Commissioners.

In its 15th anniversary year, the Broadband Commission launched a **new four-part series of reports under the State of Broadband 2025**. This expanded approach reflects the growing complexity of the broadband and digital ecosystem, offering focused insights into specific areas: progress toward achieving the Commission’s seven Advocacy Targets; regional developments with a spotlight on Africa; emerging satellite and non-terrestrial technologies; and the broader transformation of digital societies, including AI, data governance, and digital infrastructure.

The first in the series – [*The State of Broadband Report: Advocacy Targets*](https://broadbandcommission.org/publication/state-of-broadband-2025/), reviews 15 years of global progress toward the Commission’s seven Advocacy Targets. The report highlights gains and challenges in the different areas including:

1. Policy: the report finds that policy-making has evolved to include new and emerging topics such as digital transformation and AI.

2. Affordability: there has been strong progress in affordability, with the target for mobile broadband affordability having been achieved at the global level. Also, there has been progress towards the target for fixed broadband affordability, however, this target has not yet been achieved.

3. Digital skills: over two-thirds of all people now go online regularly, with digital skills broadly continuing to expand, as more people venture online.

4. Connectivity for MSMEs and increased use of e-finance: Digital financial inclusion has been growing among some sections of the online population, particularly youth, at the global level. Among firms and businesses, connectivity and digital capabilities vary significantly by size of enterprise, although significant data limitations make it difficult to assess enterprise connectivity in some regions of the world. However, based on the survey data available, connectivity and the digital capabilities of Micro-, Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) are broadly improving over time.

5. Bridging the digital gender divide: The gender digital divide is narrowing in terms of absolute numbers of men and women online. Gender parity has increased from 0.90 in 2019 to 0.94 in 2024 indicating that the gender digital divide is narrowing overall.

Working Group on “Data Governance in the Digital Age”

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 spring 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 Working Group’s toolkit, [*Navigating Data in the Digital Age*](https://www.broadbandcommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Data-Governance-Toolkit.pdf), was formally issued on 8 July at the 20th Anniversary of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20) High-Level Event 2025 in Geneva. This publication reflects a collaborative effort among experts, policymakers, practitioners, civil society and the private sector committed to advancing human rights-based and equitable approaches to data governance.

The *Data Governance Toolkit: Navigating Data in the Digital Age* offers a practical, rights-based guide to help governments, institutions, and stakeholders make data work for all.

The Toolkit is organized around four foundational data governance components—referred to as the 4Ps of Data Governance:

– Why (Purpose): How to define a vision and purpose for data governance in the context of AI, digital transformation, and sustainable development.

– How (Principles): What principles should guide a governance framework to balance innovation, security, and ethical considerations.

– Who (People and Processes): Identifying the stakeholders, institutions, and processes required to build and enforce responsible governance structures.

– What (Practices and Mechanisms): Policies and best practices to manage data across its entire lifecycle while ensuring privacy, interoperability, and regulatory compliance.

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