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|  | **Document OPCWGINT-13/3** |
| **12 September 2025** |
| **English only** |
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PHYSICAL OPEN CONSULTATION OF THE COUNCIL WORKING GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL INTERNET-RELATED PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES
(CWG-INTERNET)

**Brief Summary of the Online Open Consultation and Physical Open Consultation
(March – August 2025)**

# 1 Introduction

The 2016 Council instructed the CWG-Internet to produce a brief summary of the Open Online Consultation and Physical Open Consultation Meetings:

a) ITU secretariat should prepare a brief draft summary of the written contributions to the online open consultation and the discussions during the physical open consultation meeting,

b) Stakeholders present at the physical open consultation meeting should agree on the brief summary,

c) Submit brief summary, without edits, to the next CWG-Internet for inclusion as an Annex to the Chairman’s report.

d) CWG-Internet should consider and discuss the open consultation brief summary.

# 2 Online Open Consultation on "Ensuring meaningful connectivity to the Internet for landlocked developing countries (LLDCs)"

**2.1** An Online Open Consultation was conducted from March to August 2025 on the topic of "Ensuring meaningful connectivity to the Internet for landlocked developing countries (LLDCs)". During this consultation, 9 responses were received from a variety of stakeholders and regions. The responses provided rich inputs, sharing different views with regard to the following specific questions:

*“*1. What strategies can be adopted to ensure meaningful connectivity to the Internet for LLDCs?

2. What unique challenges do LLDCs face in attaining meaningful connectivity to the Internet, and what specific policies and measures can be taken, in particular, regarding the following:

– affordability

– quality of bandwidth or communications

– investment

– infrastructure

– enabling environment

– security and resilience

3. What can ITU Membership, governments and other stakeholders, including those from transit countries, do to ensure meaningful connectivity to the Internet for LLDCs?”

The meeting appreciated and thanked all stakeholders who responded to the online consultations.

**2.2** A compilation of the summaries received directly from the individual online submitters, including relevant comments made by participants during the meeting, can be found in the [Annex](#Annex) of this document, as well as in the published compilation [Document OPCWGINT-13/2 (Rev. 1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-OPCWGINT13-C-0002/en).

# 3 Open Consultation on "Ensuring meaningful connectivity to the Internet for landlocked developing countries (LLDCs)"

**3.1** The thirteenth Physical Open Consultation, on the topic of “Ensuring meaningful connectivity to the Internet for landlocked developing countries (LLDCs)”, took place on 12 September 2025 with over 170 registered participants. The Vice Chair - European Region, Mr Lucien Castex, was Acting Chair on behalf of the Chair of CWG-Internet, Mr Wojciech Berezowski.

**3.2** Mr Cosmas Zavazava, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. He thanked them for their continued support of the work of the CWG-Internet and highlighted the relevance of the topic of this consultation, highlighting the unique constraints faced by LLDCs and the need for investment in universal meaningful connectivity (UMC) to unlock access to essential services, strengthen resilience, and support integration into the global economy.

**3.3** The Acting Chair presented the Agenda and welcomed Mr Thierry Geiger, Head, ICT Data and Analytics Division, BDT, ITU as a special expert for a presentation on "Facts and Figures: Focus on Landlocked Developing Countries." The presentation highlighted the state of digital development in Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), distilling key connectivity trends and findings from the ITU’s 2025 publication [*Facts and Figures: Focus on LLDCs*](https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/facts-figures-for-lldc/). It underscored persistent divides, policy gaps, and disparities, while calling for stronger action on infrastructure, affordability, policies, and data to unlock LLDCs’ digital potential.

**3.4** Participants thanked Mr Geiger for participating in the meeting and contributing their expertise to the consultation. They commended the work being carried out in the BDT and engaged in discussions on the next steps to address the different factors presented to advance meaningful connectivity, including on data and digital skills.

**3.5** After the panel discussion, compilation Document [OPCWGINT-13/2 (Rev. 1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-OPCWGINT13-C-0002/en) was presented to the meeting and the Acting Chair invited various stakeholders to take the floor to present their submitted views.

# 4 Summary of discussions during the Physical Open Consultation

Stakeholders present at the meeting agreed on the brief summary of the thirteenth Virtual Meeting – Physical Open Consultation of CWG-Internet, as included below:

**4.1** Participants thanked the different stakeholders for their active participation and the valuable inputs submitted to this open consultation, while also commending the CWG-Internet for organizing this open consultation and for considering the contributions made to the consultation.

**4.2** Participants commended the recommendations presented in the various contributions, encouraging Secretariat and other countries, LLDCs and otherwise, to consider developing and promoting innovative solutions, such as through the use of IXPs, spectrum management, and community networks, to foster the deployment of affordable and quality Internet in order to advance UMC and connect the last mile in underdeveloped areas*.*

**4.3** A participant requested Secretariat to maintain the presentations of this session in the CWG-Internet consultation repository. Secretariat confirmed that ITU maintains an online repository of all stakeholder inputs to the various consultations, organized thematically, conducted over the years.

**4.4** A participant expressed support for some contributions that highlight the importance of data sovereignty, the absence of which has various legal, technical and financial repercussions for the digital economy.

**4.5** Participants expressed appreciation for contributions stressing the importance of the collaboration between transit countries and LLDCs through regional and sub-regional platforms, including aspects such as the harmonization of licensing, spectrum management, joint infrastructure corridors, and interconnection frameworks, to foster investment and simplify cross-border connectivity.

**4.6** A participant noted the contributions that highlight the importance of making data about digital infrastructure public, as it helps foster economic regulation, attracting investments in non-economically attractive areas, facilitating the shaping of better public policies, and ensuring that ISPs have the correct information to request access to the last mile.

**4.7** A participant commended contributions that highlight the significant role of respecting human rights and gender considerations, including in relation to aboriginal communities.

**4.8** A participant stated the importance of contributions that note the significant suite of regulatory activities that address not only affordability and resilience but also environment sustainability of the digital ecosystem.

**4.9** The meeting invited CWG-Internet to have a substantive discussion on the outputs of the open consultation, and suggested that the Secretariat share the contributions and compilation Document [OPCWGINT-13/2 (Rev. 1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-OPCWGINT13-C-0002/en) also with the relevant Study Groups and projects and programmes in the three ITU sectors and the General Secretariat.

# 5 Closing

**5.1** In closing, the Acting Chair of the meeting thanked all stakeholders who sent submissions and participated in the open consultation discussions, and encouraged the CWG-Internet to consider the received responses and the fruitful discussions of this meeting. He also expressed his thanks to the Elected Officials for their presence and support and the Secretariat and remote moderator for their efficient assistance during the meeting.

**5.2** The participants thanked the Acting Chair for his efficient management of the Physical Open Consultation. The participants also thanked the Secretariat for their effective organisation of the online consultation and of the physical open consultation and the remote moderator for the efficient support.

 Lucien CASTEX

 Chair Ad Interim

*Annex:* ***1***

ANNEX

|  | **Date** | **Submitter(contributions hyperlinked)** | **Response** |
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| **1.** | 5 August 2025 | [CONATEL](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-mar2025.aspx?ListItemID=6) | **Summary provided in the comment box:** The document analyzes the evolution of international commitments related to ensuring meaningful Internet connectivity in Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs). It highlights that, although the importance of connectivity was recognized as early as 2003 in forums such as the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), early action plans specific to LLDCs did not prioritize ICT infrastructure. It was not until the Vienna Conference in 2014 and the Awaza Conference in 2025 that more concrete measures were included to address infrastructure gaps and access disparities, including gender-based digital divides. Paraguay is presented as a case study illustrating efforts at multilateral, regional, bilateral, and national levels to improve international Internet connectivity. Key initiatives include the promotion of regional connectivity forums, agreements with Brazil and Argentina, the implementation of Internet Exchange Points (IXPs), and the reduction of international Internet connectivity costs. Despite these advancements, challenges persist, such as low fixed broadband penetration, high internal connectivity costs, and a fragmented regulatory framework. Paraguay’s National Telecommunications Plan 2021-2025 includes initiatives aimed at expanding coverage and fostering local-level partnerships. Finally, the document proposes a series of strategic recommendations to overcome existing barriers. These include the development of integrated regional digital infrastructure, cross-border cooperation, open access and competitive regulatory policies, investment in wireless and satellite technologies, and the strengthening of digital skills and human capacity. Specific challenges are identified in areas such as affordability, service quality, investment, infrastructure, enabling environment, and cybersecurity—each accompanied by policy recommendations aligned with international standards. The active engagement of governments, transit countries, international organizations, and the private sector is deemed essential to achieve sustainable and inclusive connectivity. |
| **2.** | 6 August 2025 | [Italy](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-mar2025.aspx?ListItemID=7) | **Summary provided in the comment box:**Digital connectivity represents a concrete opportunity for economic and social transformation for LLDCs that address geographic and structural constraints related to landforms and lack of sea access routes limiting international transportation and infrastructure maintenance, making these countries dependent on neighboring countries. It is important to arrest the isolation of LLDCs by eliminating communication constraints, problems related to long distances to be traveled in the almost complete absence of standoff infrastructure and adequate commercial routes, simplify transit and customs procedures, and encourage the implementation of new technologies for the creation and conversion of digital services (online trade, new distribution networks, work optimization, improved and continuous logistics control, transportation control through advanced tracking and management systems, and significant reduction of transportation and import/export costs). It is crucial to involve the population in the digital transformation process improving the people's digital skills and access to digital services and devices to stop the “usage gap”. In LLDCs, border territories often have lack of urbanization and the absence of suitable infrastructure, making it impossible to have safe trade routes. The digital exclusion of developing countries is often due to geopolitical vulnerabilities to neighboring countries, lack of digital infrastructure, lack of transparency in policies with neighboring countries, lack of access to technological innovations and absence of regulatory frameworks. The use of low-altitude earth-orbiting satellite networks can be a solution to the lack of connectivity in areas not currently reached by broadband and an important component for national resilience and meaningful connectivity (even during the disruption of other technologies) but requires more expensive receiving device, private installation of antennas and special infrastructure (Networking Operations Center). |
| **3** | 7 August 2025 | [ISOC Comoros Chapter](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-mar2025.aspx?ListItemID=8) | **Summary provided in the comment box:**This contribution highlights the multifaceted challenges faced by Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) in achieving meaningful Internet connectivity, including high bandwidth demands, infrastructure renewal pressures in low-income contexts, data sovereignty risks with AI, and economic imbalances with global platforms. The contribution advocates for fair access to international gateways, investment in edge computing and localized AI models, harmonized regulatory frameworks, and capacity-building for local network and data professionals. It emphasizes the need for digital sovereignty, equitable value distribution, and inclusive governance to ensure that LLDCs are not left behind in the global digital transformation. |
| **4** | 7 August 2025 | [Uganda Communications Commission](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-mar2025.aspx?ListItemID=10) | **Summary provided in the comment box:**The contribution highlights and addresses the complex barriers that Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) face in achieving meaningful internet connectivity, using Uganda as a case study. It emphasizes how the lack of direct access to submarine cables forces LLDCs to rely on transit through neighboring coastal countries, resulting in high wholesale and retail data costs, increased latency, service disruptions, and infrastructure vulnerabilities. The submission outlines detailed policy recommendations across key focus areas including affordability, quality of bandwidth, investment, infrastructure, enabling environment, and cybersecurity. Strategies include regulatory harmonization, infrastructure sharing, regional integration through bodies like the East African Community (EAC), public-private partnerships, and innovative technologies such as hybrid satellite-radio systems. The contribution also advocates for domestic backbone expansion, device affordability through financing schemes, and investment in digital literacy and local content. It concludes with clear roles for stakeholders: the ITU is urged to prioritize LLDCs in global digital agendas, LLDC governments to foster enabling environments, transit countries to ensure open and fair access, and the private sector, civil society, and development partners to co-invest and champion inclusive connectivity. |
| **5** | 7 August 2025 | [Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-mar2025.aspx?ListItemID=16) | **Summary provided in the contribution:**Tanzania acknowledges and supports ITU’s commitment to connecting the world and recognizes the shared responsibility in facilitating meaningful connectivity for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), particularly our neighbours in the East African Community (EAC) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) regions.As a transit country with direct access to multiple submarine cable systems SEACOM, EASSy, 2Africa, among others, Tanzania plays a strategic role in facilitating international Internet connectivity to LLDCs in our region. We firmly believe that ensuring affordable, resilient, secure, and high-quality connectivity for LLDCs is not only a matter of technical infrastructure, but also a regional development imperative and a key enabler for digital integration, trade facilitation, and inclusive socio-economic growth.In this regard, Tanzania is pleased to participate in this Open Consultation and share its views and experiences to help advance practical and inclusive solutions for connecting LLDCs to the global digital economy. |
| **6** | 8 August 2025 | [Internet Society](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-mar2025.aspx?ListItemID=11) | **Summary provided in the comment box:**Landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) face unique challenges to achieving meaningful connectivity due to the lack of direct access to subsea cables and dependence of access on neighboring countries, which can increase costs, reduce connectivity quality, and hamper resilience. To address these challenges, Internet access policies and strategies must go beyond basic access and focus on ensuring availability, affordability, resilience, and local technical knowledge. Enhancing domestic connectivity through high-capacity, resilient fiber backbones, especially at border crossings, and fostering local content development and access via Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) and data centers are the key to ensuring not only the expansion of infrastructure and quality of communications, but also affordability, security, and resilience. These efforts should be facilitated by technical capacity-building, developing local expertise, and promoting digital literacy and skills for users. For building and sustaining meaningful connectivity, governments should create an enabling environment by removing regulatory barriers and promoting investment and competition. It is crucial to include non-governmental stakeholders, especially the technical community, academia, and civil society, in key decision-making processes to guarantee informed policy strategies that cater to the specific local needs of a particular LLDC. |
| **7** | 8 August 2025 | [Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, Nepal](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-mar2025.aspx?ListItemID=15) | **Summary provided in the contribution:**As a landlocked developing country with diverse geography and development needs, Nepal recognizes meaningful connectivity as a vital catalyst for inclusive growth, digital transformation, and regional integration. This submission outlines Nepal’s perspective on strategic approaches, unique challenges faced by LLDCs, and practical policy recommendations for ensuring equitable access to digital opportunities. It also includes a proposal for a Global LLDC Connectivity Compact (GLCC) to strengthen international cooperation. Please find the full response document attached to this email. The submission includes a concise summary as per the consultation requirements and addresses all three guiding questions outlined in the consultation brief. We request that Nepal’s contribution be included in the Compilation Document and published on the ITU website. We also express our interest in participating in the upcoming Open Consultation Meeting and contributing constructively to the discussions. Should you require any additional information or clarification, please feel free to contact us at [insert contact email/phone]. We appreciate the ITU’s leadership in creating inclusive policy platforms and look forward to continued collaboration to bridge the digital divide for LLDCs. |
| **8** | 9 August 2025 | [Derechos Digitales](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-mar2025.aspx?ListItemID=12) | **Summary provided in the contribution:**Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) face unique challenges and structural barriers to achieving meaningful connectivity. In the Americas, only two countries are classified as LLDCs, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and the Republic of Paraguay. Both nations face multidimensional connectivity challenges resulting from their geographic location and socio-economic context. These obstacles intersect with broader regional connectivity issues prevalent across Latin America, including low digital literacy rates, persistent gender digital divides, uneven internet access distribution, significant urban-rural disparities, and high broadband costs.In this joint contribution, we argue that meaningful connectivity is an enabler for the exercise of human rights such as freedom of expression, association, education, health, among others. Therefore, we begin by contextualizing connectivity in Paraguay and Bolivia as the Americas' only LLDCs. Then, we highlight a set of human rights-aligned strategies to achieve meaningful connectivity through three key areas: net neutrality vs zero rating; protection and strengthening of community networks and other initiatives to internet access in remote areas; and Intersectional digital literacy strategies. We address challenges in achieving connectivity alongside measures that could be taken and policies that could be shaped to tackle them. And finally, we propose human rights-based recommendations for advancing meaningful connectivity in Bolivia and Paraguay, advocating that, when anchored in social justice and human rights principles, connectivity policies can transcend technical metrics like broadband speed and stability to also actively incorporate inclusion imperatives like affordability, digital literacy, and multilingualism. |
| **9** | 12 August 2025 | [Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-mar2025.aspx?ListItemID=13) | **Summary provided in the comment box:**Malaysia’s contribution to the ITU CWG-Internet consultation highlights a multi-dimensional strategy to support Landlocked Developing Countries (“LLDCs”) in achieving meaningful Internet connectivity. It emphasises the persistent structural and policy challenges that hinder digital inclusion, such as limited infrastructure, affordability constraints, and gaps in institutional capacity. These issues are particularly pronounced in remote and underserved areas, where access remains sparse or unreliable. Malaysia underscores the need for a comprehensive approach that includes effective governance, sustainable investment models, cross-border cooperation, and inclusive regulatory frameworks. Malaysia advocates for capacity-building, policy innovation, and infrastructure development, both terrestrial and non-terrestrial, as essential components in bridging the connectivity divide and supporting equitable digital transformation in LLDCs. |

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