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| DRAFT OPINION ON GREEN DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY | |
| **Purpose**  Draft Opinion on green digital transformation: climate change and environmental sustainability.  **Action required**  The Informal Expert Group on WTPF-26 is invited to **consider** this document. | |

DRAFT OPINION

Green digital transformation: climate change and environmental sustainability

The seventh World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum (Geneva, 2026),

recalling

*a)* Resolution 70/1 of the United Nations General Assembly, on transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular, Sustainable Development Goals 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production and 13 on Climate Action;

*b)* Resolution 70/125 of the United Nations General Assembly, on the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS);

*c)* Resolution 182 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on the role of telecommunications/ICTs in regard to climate change and protection of the environment;

*d)* Resolution 1429 of the ITU Council, adopted at its 2024 session, on ITU’s role in facilitating ICTs’ contribution to sustainability and climate action;

*e)* Resolution 73 (Rev. New Delhi, 2024) of the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly, on information and communication technologies, environment, climate change and circular economy;

*f)* Resolution 79 (Rev. New Delhi, 2024) of World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly, on the role of telecommunications/ICTs in handling and controlling e-waste from telecommunications and information technology equipment and methods of treating it;

*g)* Resolution 66 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference, on information and communication technology, environment, climate change and circular economy,

emphasising

*a)* that climate change and biodiversity loss and pollution represent significant challenges of our time and that addressing them requires progress towards sustainable development;

*b)* that limiting global warming requires rapid, deep and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities in light of different national circumstances,

taking into account

*a)* that telecommunications/ICTs contribute to climate change throughout their life cycle: during the production phase (raw material extraction, processing, manufacturing, distribution), the use phase (GHG emissions, use of non-renewable resources and energy), and the end-of-life phase (waste production);

*b)* that a green digital transformation combats climate change by developing, deploying, and disposing telecommunications/ICTs in environmentally sustainable ways;

*c)* that a green digital transformation reduces the environmental footprint of telecommunications/ICTs by promoting circularity throughout their life cycle: extending the life of equipment, combatting software obsolescence, promoting the repair and refurbishment devices, and improving the recovery of material resources from related waste;

*d)* that new policy initiatives, such as a green digital transformation, are essential to meet agreed climate change targets laid out in the Paris Agreement signed at the 21st UN Climate Change Conference (COP21), with the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) reporting that limitingglobal warming to 1.5°C is impossible under the current Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs),

considering

*a)* ITU’s Telecommunication Standardization Bureau’s (ITU-T) *Green Digital Companies Report* with World Benchmarking Alliance, that revealed that the race to develop artificial intelligence and expand data centres is driving unprecedented growth in the digital sector and fuelling a sharp rise in GHG emissions and energy consumption;

*b)* the importance of leveraging digital technologies for achieving the ultimate objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in the context of sustainable development, and the Paris Agreement signed at the 21st UN Climate Change Conference (COP21);

*c)* that public procurement frameworks and market mechanisms can encourage the deployment of environmentally sustainable telecommunications/ICTs,

recognising

*a)* that that the environmental benefits and damage of telecommunications/ICTs are not evenly distributed and that many developing countries suffer from environmental hazards due to e-waste;

*b)* according to the United Nations’ *2024 Digital Economy Report*, in per capita terms, developed countries generated on average 3.25 kg of digital-related waste compared with less than 1 kg in developing countries, and 0.21 kg in the least developed countries (LDCs);

*c)* that a green digital transformation must factor in that many developing countries still need to digitalize further in order to participate effectively in the global economy and society;

*d)* ITU-T’s work evaluating the environmental effects of telecommunications and ICTs led by Study Group 5;

*e)* ITU’s Radiocommunication Sector’s work that has emphasised sustainability, in particular, the work of Study Group 7 (Earth Observation and Climate);

*f)* ITU’s Development Sector’s work that has focused on environmental concerns for telecommunications/ICTs, in particular the work of Study Group 2 on ICTs for the environment,

is of the view that

1 that a green digital transformation can only be environmentally sustainable through the rapid, deep and sustained reductions in global GHG emissions;

2 that national, regional and local governments, the private sector, civil society, the technical community and academia should partner together and work towards green digital transformation;

3 while telecommunications/ICTs make a significant contribution to global GHG emissions, their transformative power can be harnessed in order to address climate change;

4 the increasing, dynamic pace of the telecommunications/ICTs sector is compatible with a green digital transformation and represents an opportunity for economic growth and sustainable development while simultaneously decreasing GHG emissions from sectors such as transport, heating and cooling and manufacture;

5 telecommunications/ICTs can help to mitigate the environmental impact of other sectors by identifying actionable insights through the large-scale collection, management and processing of data;

6 transitioning to a more circular economy would optimize the economic and environmental impacts of telecommunications/ICTs, including supporting business opportunities and job creation;

7 sustainability, energy efficiency, and reducing e-waste should be integral considerations in the development of telecommunication/ICTs,

invites Member States

1 to utilise telecommunications/ICTs as an effective method for reducing GHG emissions across multiple economic sectors;

2 to formulate appropriate strategies and policies at the national, regional, and local level that promote the circularity of telecommunication/ICTs equipment at the consumer, the industry, and trade level;

3 to consider launching multistakeholder working groups for the eco-design of telecommunication/ICTs to develop low-cost safe and sustainable-by-design solutions with reduced carbon footprint across their lifecycle;

4 to foster an enabling environment for investment into environmentally sustainable telecommunication/ICTs;

5 to invest in research and development into environmentally sustainable telecommunication/ICTs;

6 to consider using government procurement requirements to encourage deployment of sustainable telecommunications/ICTS among relevant organisations, if appropriate;

7 to encourage industry to implement a Life Cycle Assessment on their products and publicly report the environmental impacts from raw material extraction, transport, manufacture, distribution, use, and end of life;

8 to implement public awareness campaigns on e-waste disposal and recycling that increase understanding among consumers about the waste implications of their devices,

invites Member States and Sector Members

1 to take urgent and immediate steps to reduce the negative environmental impact and risks of telecommunication/ICTs;

2 to strengthen their commitment to tackling e-waste, by planning for future recycling at the design stage of future ICTs;

3 to harness telecommunication/ICTs to combat climate change and promote circularity in other sectors, such as energy, manufacturing industries, transportation, buildings and agriculture to achieve the sustainable development goals;

4 to recognise the importance of international collaboration for a green digital transformation, including voluntary and mutually agreed technology transfer and development, across all actors of society, sectors and regions, in contributing to progress towards the goals of the UNFCCC conferences and the Paris Agreement;

5 to consider adopting relevant ITU recommendations on e-waste and the environment;

6 to participate actively in ITU’s activities on sustainable development and the intersectoral related efforts,

invites the ITU Secretary-General

1 to work on raising the awareness of all related stakeholders, especially those most effected by climate change, and having regard to their development plans, on ICT environmental protection issues and for the well-being of the population;

2 to use ITU’s platform to promote sustainable green digital transformation that reduces the digital divide between developed and developing Member States;

3 to use the 2026 World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum as an occasion to strengthen coordination between the three sectors on their work addressing green digital transformation.

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