



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

# **Industry Advisory Group on Development Issues and the Private Sector Chief Regulatory Officers' (IAGDI-CRO) Meeting**

Industry and Private Sector: Contributing to the  
Partner2Connect Digital Coalition

**Online, 24 February 2022**

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**Industry and private sector leaders gathered online on 24 February 2022 to gain insights based on their experience as to how the Partner2Connect Digital Development Roundtable may bring concrete results in terms of viable and bankable projects, and application of transformative financing models for connectivity.**

The IAGDI-CRO meeting which is contributing to the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition, adopted an Outcome Statement comprised of concrete proposals that will contribute to the objectives and outcomes of the multistakeholder alliance to foster meaningful connectivity and digital transformation in the hardest-to-connect communities.



In her opening remarks, **Ms. Doreen Bogdan Martin, the BDT Director**, highlighted the importance of a more cooperative, holistic, and cross-sectoral approach in order to succeed in bridging global and regional connectivity gaps. She emphasized the important role played by the private sector and industry as governments around the world struggle to get back on their feet after the economic battering inflicted over the past two years.



**Mr. Bocar Ba, Chair of IAGDI-CRO, and CEO of SAMENA Telecommunications Council**, gave an **overview of the IAGDI-CRO**, recognizing accessible, affordable, and meaningful connection for everyone as a central part of ITU's work. He encouraged contributions and commitments by the Partner2Connect initiative through collaboration and partnerships across the digital ecosystem.

## **IAGDI-CRO and the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition**

Building on the outcomes of the Road to Addis Digital Development Series, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology, launched the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition in September 2021. The Coalition, recognizing that progress can only be made through a multistakeholder and partnership-based approach, focuses on four main areas: connecting people everywhere, empowering communities, building digital ecosystems, and incentivizing investments.

To foster participation from different time zones, two IAGDI-CRO sessions were held on the same day, and both heard from a panel of speakers sharing their examples of engagement and advocacy work.



Mr. Alex WONG  
BDT ITU



Mr. Brandon SEIR  
Kacific



Ms. Yolanda CUBA  
MTN Group



Mr. Osamu KAMIMURA  
Softbank Corporation



Ms. Hayun KANG  
KISDI



Ms. Philomena GNANAPRAGASAM  
AIBD



Mr. Rahul VATTS  
Bharti Airtel



Ms. Esther PEH  
AT&T



Mr. John GIUSTI  
GSMA



Ms. Natalia VICENTE  
GSOA



Mr. Ben WALLIS  
Microsoft



Mr. Antoine DE CLERCK  
Orange



Ms. Donna BETHEA-MURPHY  
Inmarsat



Mr. Carlos REY-MORENO  
APC



Ms. Nancy ESKENAZI  
SES



Ms. Amy ALVAREZ  
AT&T



Ms. Oyeronke OYETUNDE  
MTN Group

**Mr. Alex Wong**, Chief Special Initiatives at BDT, ITU, described in his intervention the purpose of Partner2Connect as to provide private sector members with new models of engagement, partnership and collaboration. According to him, the pledging platform will be launched on 16 March to welcome leadership and commitment from the participants which will culminate in the roundtable at the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) from 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

## Fostering Universal and Meaningful Connectivity

The latest ITU data show that approximately 2.9 billion people remain offline, 96 per cent of whom live in developing countries. Those who remain unconnected face multiple barriers, including a lack of access: some 390 million people are not even covered by a mobile broadband signal. At IAGDI-CRO, speakers and participants expressed their perspective of fostering universal and meaningful connectivity.

**Mr. Ben Wallis**, Director of Technology of UN Affairs & International Organizations at Microsoft, stated their belief in access, readiness, and applications, and stressed the importance of affordability in terms of devices and use.

**Mr. Brandon Seir**, Chief Commercial Officer at Kacific, shared the organization’s effort in launching satellites to provide connectivity for the Pacific Islands to connect LDCs and LLDCs, with an emphasis on addressing tax and regulatory issues through Partner2Connect.

Comparably, **Ms. Donna Bethea Murphy**, Senior Vice-President of Global Regulatory at Inmarsat, believed that satellite technology is key, particularly for rural areas, to building universal and meaningful connectivity, and announced Inmarsat’s pledge of 1.2 million USD in satellite airtime.

**Ms. Philomena Gnanapragasam**, Director at AIBD, highlighted their strength in media as well as their work with broadcasting entities to bring awareness to connectivity issues and community networks that were critical especially during the pandemic.

Key to extending connectivity, affordability is one of the focuses of industry and private sector members. **Ms. Yolanda Cuba**, Vice President for the Southern and Eastern Africa Region at MTN Group, highlighted their commitment to universal access, including lowering the cost of devices and data, and sought to work with governments and other stakeholders on Partner2Connect to address current issues.

# Connectivity as Empowerment in the Time of Crises

Given the COVID-19 and other major challenges the world is confronting, ICTs and the Internet have been vital in empowering business, employment, education, and socializing, enabling innovations that helped mitigate costs of the tragedy, and build resilience against future crises. Sector and industry members highlighted the importance of digital inclusion, skill training, and relevant services to empower communities that were left behind or confronted by challenges and crises.

**Mr. Antoine de Clerck**, Social Responsibility Animation Director at Orange, focused on bridging the usage gap, boosting digital equality and fighting digital exclusion. Orange has five years commitments on helping develop digital skills, which will contribute to the Coalition.

**Ms. Esther Peh**, Lead External & Regulatory Affairs for Asia-Pacific at AT&T, stated that they are committed to empowering communities through Partner2Connect. In Indonesia and Malaysia, 6000 women are being empowered to become effective entrepreneurs. They are also training women in Mexico and are ready to widen their activities to support the rest of the world by supporting P2C.

**Ms. Hayun Kang**, Head of International Cooperation Research Division at KISDI, highlighted their effort as a research institute to partner with OECD with the aim to help with the development of digital skills.

**Ms. Nancy Eskenazi**, Senior Vice President for Global Legal & Regulatory Affairs at SES, recognized the role played by satellite communications in contributing to emergency telecommunications to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 by supporting hospitals.

Comparably, **Mr. Osamu Kamimura**, Head of Spectrum Policy Division at SoftBank Corporation, highlighted the need for optimal use of Non-Terrestrial Network (NTN) technologies, specifically HAPS and furthermore suitable combinations between HAPS and Satellite which are helpful not only for extending connectivity but for disaster mitigation and response as well.

During the meeting, a poll was conducted to engage all the participants and learn from their opinions.

## 1. What do you understand from a Partner2Connect (P2C) to be?

An initiative to bring stakeholders to agree on innovative approaches to connect the world.

Incentivizing investments for digital connectivity to transform lives and communities.

Partner in high-impact projects to achieve the UN SDGs.

**All of the above. [Most Voted]**

## 2. Why is P2C important for your entity?

It positions my organization in the multistakeholder platform as a contributor.

It helps to connect the world and foster digital transformation in the hardest-to-connect communities.

It boosts efforts to reach the 2.9 billion people that are still offline.

**All of the above. [Most Voted]**

# Looking into Future: Towards Multistakeholder Partnerships

We are running out of time, and significant actions have been taken by many participants. **Mr. Carlos Rey Moreno**, Project Coordinator at APC, shared the organization's efforts in providing support to over 50 initiatives in 16 countries in the Global South.

**Ms. Oyeronke Oyetunde**, Vice Chair of IAGDI-CRO, called for initiatives that can bring together the whole industry, all stakeholders, governments, private sectors, NGOs, and the civil society, which found echoes in the interventions of other speakers.

**Mr. Rahul Vatts**, Chief Regulatory Officer at Bharti Airtel, recognized the need to embrace emerging technologies and welcomed new partnerships to promote education, financial inclusion, start-ups, and ubiquitous connectivity.

**Ms. Natalia Vicente**, Director of Public Affairs & Communications at GSOA, highlighted the significance of "bringing changes when it matters most", and sought to partner with local entities, schools and work with mobile operators to extend connectivity.

**Mr. John Giusti**, Chief Regulatory Officer and Head of Advocacy at GSMA, acknowledged ITU's convening power to bring together multiple stakeholders and emphasized the need to deepen partnerships with governments and other entities to "unlock the power of connectivity".

Basing on the interventions made in both sessions, **Ms. Amy Alvarez**, Vice-Chair of IAGDI-CRO, appreciated the shared vision and commitment to connect the 2.9 billion individuals who remain offline. The different capabilities, technologies, geographic reach, and focuses brought to the meeting by the participants are the strength and asset that form the strong foundation for making collective progress across the four Partner2Connect focus areas.



In his closing remarks, **Mr. Cosmas Zavazava**, Chief of the Partnerships for Digital Development Department, BDT, expressed the vision held by ITU-D to bring together all stakeholders for a common goal. He believes that the IAGDI-CRO, together with other ITU-D initiatives including Tech Talks and Know Your Members group, is a precious opportunity to hear the voices and ideas from industry and private sectors, which could lead to progress in closing digital gaps, extending connectivity, and empowering people.

## IAGDI-CRO Governance



**Mr. Bocar BA**  
*Chairman, IAGDI-CRO CEO,*  
SAMENA  
Telecommunications Council



**Ms. Amy ALVAREZ**  
*Vice Chair, IAGDI-CRO AVP -*  
*International External &*  
*Regulatory Affairs, AT&T*



**Ms. Oyeronke OYETUNDE**  
*Vice Chair, IAGDI-CRO*  
*General Manager: Regulatory Affairs,*  
MTN Group Management Services