



# **Emerging Technology Week for Sustainable Development: Accelerating Digital Transformation in LDCs, SIDs and LLDCs**

**5-9 July 2021**

Concept Note

## **RATIONALE AND BACKGROUND**

The seventh World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-17) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) was held from 9 to 20 October 2017 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. During this WTDC-17, a set of regional initiatives were adopted, some of which are pertaining to emerging technologies. Within the framework of the implementation of the regional initiatives, the first Emerging Technology week was held in Abu Dhabi, UAE from 26-29 August 2019 (more information can be found [here](#)). Based on its success, in 2020, the Interregional Emerging Technology week for Development was organized in the Arab and African regions from 13-18 December 2020 (more information can be found [here](#)). This year, the emerging technology week is organized in all the regions on July 5- July 9 and focuses on LDCs, SIDs, LLDCs.

As we embark on the decade for actions to meet the 2030 Sustainable Agenda targets, the emerging technologies will play a key role in implementing the SDGs. It is important to recall that the UN General Assembly adopted resolution A/Res/70/1 titled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” adopted on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 2015, mentioned “The spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies, as does scientific and technological innovation across areas as diverse as medicine and energy”. Moreover, specific targets relevant to information and communication technologies were outlined in SDGs 4, 5, 9 and 17 and t

relevant technologies were highlighted in SDGs 1, 2, 7, and 14. It is also important to note that ICTs have a great impact on SDGs 3, 8, 10 and 11.

Since 2015, when the SDGs were adopted, ICTs evolved significantly, with spread off emerging technologies such as 5G, artificial intelligence, blockchain, cloud computing, Internet of things, big data, low orbiting satellites, etc. Each of these technologies have had profound impacts on societies across the world, in different sectors, accelerating countries strides to achieving the SDGs. Furthermore, the global effects of Covid-19 on societies has shown the importance of connectedness and the vitality of the emerging technologies to provide unprecedented insights, develop and manage knowledge, raise awareness, facilitate collaboration among stakeholders across the world and empower policy makers to make informed decisions. It is noteworthy, that countries that had invested in ICTs in the past years were better prepared to manage the COVID-19 crisis from both health and economical perspectives than countries with least connectivity.

As the world is evolving into a new normal, it is important globally and especially in LDCs, SIDs and LLDCs, to extend meaningful connectivity to citizens, and to invest in emerging technologies to digitize their economies and digitally transform their societies.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE WEEK

The overall objective of the Emerging Technology Week is to promote the wide scale deployment of emerging technologies including, Artificial Intelligence, IoT, Big Data, low orbit satellites, 5G, digital government and blockchain, to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Moreover, through exchange of experiences and solutions, and by engaging a diverse range of international, regional and national stakeholders, the event will build partnerships and foster reflection on emerging technologies. It is expected raise awareness, engage stakeholders, catalyze and expand the impact of ongoing regional initiatives on emerging technologies for development.

The Emerging Technology Week is planned to take place annually with a new theme each year focusing on specific emerging technologies and/or targeting a selected number of SDGs. This year the focus is on LDCs, SIDs, LLDCs and the target SDGs are SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Indeed, due to the COVID-19 crisis, a global recession has occurred that will have a devastating impact on the global economy at large and developing countries in particular. Despite the challenges, economies are planning for a new normal, and investments in emerging technologies are expected. This event will be an excellent opportunity to share and highlight countries' experiences relevant to utilizing emerging technologies to combat the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 and beyond, with the vision to achieving the SDGs on the long run, especially for the LDCs, SIDs, LLDC.

## EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- Share experience on the use of emerging technologies for post-Covid era
- Raise awareness among key stakeholders on the measures that need to be taken to utilize emerging technologies for development especially for LDCs, SIDs, LLDCs.
- Share experiences and best practices relating to AI, IoT, Smart Cities and Big Data between countries and industry

- Promote open innovation and empower innovators to develop AI, IoT, Smart Cities and Big Data applications and services
- Validate ITU deliverables related to emerging technologies (standardization, developmental and econometrics).

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Create a platform for government and stakeholders to analyze the adoption and deployment of emerging technologies, in LDCs, SIDs, LLDCs
- Reduce digital gap in LDCs, SIDs, LLDCs, using emerging technologies
- Identify priority areas for utilizing emerging technologies to meet national and regional developmental goals
- Increase use of the emerging technologies to improve development especially for LDCs, SIDs, LLDCs
- Enhance regional coordination between all stakeholders
- Customize identified solutions related to emerging technologies to tackle challenges specific to the LDCs, SIDs, LLDCs

## ACTIVITIES OF THE WEEK

- Forum on emerging technologies (webinars, panel discussions, etc.)
- Capacity building events (trainings)
- Studies and analysis (reports)
- Exchange of experiences
- Interviews with key stakeholders
- Innovation challenge (focus/applicable to solutions for LDCs, SIDs, LLDC)
- Youth session (s)
- Session (s) on women and TIC (with a focus on emerging technology)
- Countries assistance (roadmaps)
- Additional sessions on LDCs, SIDs, LLDCs)

## FORMAT OF THE WEEK

Adopting a multi-stakeholder approach, the Emerging Technology Week will bring together Governments, other UN and intergovernmental bodies, industry, civil society, academia, the private sector and citizens in advancing emerging technologies for development.

The emerging technology week is a virtual event that includes activities organized by the ITU and partners' events on emerging technology such as webinars, podcasts, studies, projects, initiatives, challenges, competitions and capacity building programmes.

## PARTNERS

### Key Organizers

This Emerging technology Week is organized by the ITU. Moreover, partners from all stakeholders are invited to organize independent or join activities during the Emerging Technology Week, to highlight their key activities on emerging technologies, at the national or regional level.

ITU will promote all activities on the webpage and will promote the events throughout the media including the social media. ITU invites partners to promote their activities on social media using the following Hashtag: #ITUET4DWeek and to reference this hashtag in their media releases.

### **Potential Partners and Participants**

- ITU Membership from all regions
- Regional organizations such as the African Union, African Union Commission (AUC), ATU, League of Arab States and AICTO, European Commission, BEREC, EaPeReg, EMERG, Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL), Regional Technical Commission of Telecommunications of Central America (COMTELCA), Caribbean Association of National Telecommunication Organizations (CANTO), Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU), LACNIC
- ITU-D Study Groups
- ITU-T
- ITU-R
- United for Smart and Sustainable Cities initiative (U4SSC)
- Private sector companies relevant to emerging technologies including ITU sector members such as: GSMA, Facebook, Google
- Academic institutions including ITU academia members
- Interested UN organizations including UN Country Teams in the Arab and African regions
- Other interested regional and international organizations such as: ISOC, ITC, IICA, BID