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| C:\Users\comas\AppData\Local\Temp\Rar$DRa0.735\jpg\ITU official logo_blue_RGB.jpg**TDAG Web Dialogues**  **12-21 May 2020, Online** |
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| **Document****: TDAG Web Dialogue on Partnerships for Digital Transformation** |
| **Event held : 26 May 2020** |
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| **Title: Final report of TDAG Web Dialogue on Partnerships for Digital Transformation: Engaging stakeholders for meaningful impact** |
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**Summary**

This document provides a summary of key points from the TDAG Web Dialogue on Partnerships for Digital Transformation held on 21 May 2020 from 13h00 to 15h00. The meeting was opened by Ms Doreen Bogdan, Director BDT. Discussions were moderated by Mr Bocar BA, CEO of SAMENA Telecommunications Council. The TDAG Web Dialogue provided an opportunity for the 150 participants (Governments, Private Sector, UN Agencies, and Academia) to discuss strategies and opportunities for partnership building, engagement for results, and projects co-financing arrangements. The first part of the dialogue was composed of a diverse and highly experienced experts, and the second part of the dialogue which focused on how the ITU’s Development Sector could strengthen participation by its Membership in the work of the Sector, was composed of experienced Discussants who served as fire starters. The two segments of the dialogue were:

* Best practices Dialogue on building strategic Partnerships for Digital Transformation (Panel Discussion)
* Strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration leading to win-win co-financing partnerships with ITU-D Membership

**Best practices Dialogue on building strategic Partnerships for Digital Transformation (Panel Discussion)**

This Panel Discussion on Partnerships for Digital Transformation highlighted the conditions necessary for the fostering of an **enabling environment for partnerships** and that digital transformation efforts can only be sustained through a **holistic multi-stakeholder approach** where public, private, and civil society collaborate for a common goal. The key highlights of the discussion covered the following:

* + - * Collaboration and partnerships are becoming more and more prominent and pressing not only because half of the world’s population still cannot participate in the digital world Inclusive and affordable broadband should remain a key area of action, **as lack of connectivity harms socio-economic integration and development and environmental sustainability**.
      * Moreover, the current COVID-19 crisis has brought to the forefront **the importance of “digital” to the development agenda**. COVID-19 has accentuated the relevance of connectivity and is forcing players to seek new opportunities, be more flexible in new approaches to partnerships.
* As more and more people are depending on digital services, economic recovery and future investment models will be quite critical, thus the importance leveraging **public-private partnerships** for deploying digital infrastructure, and the **role played fintech** in new business models.
* The **involvement of the entire ecosystem** was noted as necessary to achieve meaningful connectivity for all. Digital transformation can only succeed on a grounded shared vision, which engages and incentivizes **strategic** **partnerships which are inclusive but also fair to the different stakeholders** involved in the ecosystem.
* Moreover, it noted the importance of **building partnerships based on experience and established relationships** from past successful projects and best practices and transform them into sustained and long-lasting collaborative models.
* **Trust and confidence** were raised as key in the dialogue between government and private sector, for which clear objectives, sound business plan for long term sustainable partnerships, which must also include **identified risks, accountability and control**.
* While public and private sectors will be looking for the right investments, sometimes policies lag far behind the technological development. An **enabling policy and regulatory environment at national level**, which fosters trust and dialogue so that the right synergies between the private sector and governments can be explored was also highlighted.
* It was pointed out that **funding is required to expand broadband connectivity** and all actors should also pay a **stronger focus on digital skills, children and youth**  and the power of meaningful connectivity to fast track young people's access to educational resources and opportunities. Trust, security, online safety, and the risk of online false information were also noted as challenges to be addressed.
* Likewise, examples were given on partnerships for smart agriculture, smart transport, health and environmental issues **leveraging big data and AI tools for more informed decision making**.
* In one of the interventions, the **importance of Internet exchange points (IXPs)** for which mobile service providers and governments come together to exchange traffic and interconnect was highlighted and that. during COVID-19 crisis an enormous growth in IXPs was noted. In Africa, partnerships were being strengthened between the Internet community and governments as well as with regulators.
* It was widely recognized that **people should be kept at the center of a shared vision**. It was also suggested to transform the current COVID-19 crisis as an opportunity to leverage digital technologies and data to promote innovative ways to operate in a “new normal”.

Finally, a polling exercise was held with all participants being asked to choose from a wide menu of options signifying the most important factor considered instrumental in strengthening partnerships. Most of the respondents identified **needed conditions for effective public-private partnerships that sustain digital transformation, i.e. enabling environment, market opportunity for the private sector, and SDG-centric projects** as the most important factor.

At the end of the first segment of the dialogue, a short video was played for the participants. The video showcased some of the development work undertaken by ITU-D with its partners. The theme of the video was on the deployment of wireless broadband in Djibouti which is currently benefitting both the health and education sectors.

**Strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration leading to win-win co-financing partnerships with ITU-D Membership**

The discussion on this topic highlighted a common view that the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) should continue to strengthen engagement with its wide membership base, and better promote products and platforms for Partnerships. The following are some of the highlights:

* During the discussion, the importance of Centers of Excellence was recognized and acknowledged as it was effective in **supporting capacity development** in the field. This was also recognized as an effective channel through which relations could be strengthened with Academia for the benefit of ITU Member States.
* The need to **diversify the ITU-D membership** with non-traditional ICT sectors, such as health, agriculture, finance, etc. was proposed and suggested.
* Most of the discussants recommended that the BDT was seen a **bridge** through which **to foster partnerships** and links among Academia, private sector and ITU Member States thanks to the strength arising from f our diverse community.
* The need to make the **ITU-D website** more user-friendly and content packaged using visualization that conveys the message more effectively with ease was seen as important and urgent for ITU-D as this would facilitate better engagement with a wider audience (existing and new).
* The **mentoring programs** for the young generation should be strengthened and internships to be provided to post graduate students who can benefit from the hands-on experience in the field (ITU Field offices).
* The establishing of **introductory sessions** for new ITU-D members as well as for current members who are not familiar with ITU-D projects and Study Groups processes were viewed as being important and necessary.
* The role of **Regional Presence** in promoting BDT’s work and activities and strengthening collaboration with all stakeholders in the regions was proposed and recommended as an effective vehicle.
* Research and publishing in credible journals facilitated by ITU-D would go a long way in strengthening and attracting members of Academia.

**Wrap-up**

The meeting was ended with some key take-aways that include:

* importance of creating an enabling environment for partnerships;
* noting that digital transformation could only be sustained and impactful through a holistic multi-stakeholder approach where public, private and civil society collaborate;
* always keeping in mind that people are at the center of our common goals;
* In the current situation of COVID-19, it is important to take this as an opportunity to leverage digital technologies and data and embrace innovative ways that allows business continuity under this new normal.

In her closing remarks, the BDT Director thanked all the participants for their contributions and invaluable ideas. She stated that all these ideas would be taken on board going forward. Director BDT re-emphasized her commitment to continuously strengthen collaboration with the wide membership base, better promote ITU-D products and platforms for Partnerships and attract new members as well as retain current ones. Director, BDT noted that there were a lot of benefits that would come with more cooperation and engagement with academic institutions that have the potential of bringing a wealth of knowledge that in turn will contribute to our capacity and skills development efforts. Director, BDT also thanked the participants for proposing a more robust outreach to   non-traditional ICT sectors that have the potential of bringing more resources to the BDT. Further, the role of mentorship in ITU for the young generation, the need for better packaging of our work for ease access and use by our Members and the wider audience, and the key role played by ITU Field offices in engaging current and potential ITU-D members were seen as very important and would be taken up.

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