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ITU SPECIAL SIDE EVENT ON DIGITAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR A SUSTAINABLE AND
RESILIENT RECOVERY FROM COVID-19
HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
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>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning, good afternoon, good evening, good night to all. You have joined us today, and you will be with us for the next 60 minutes. Welcome to the special event focusing on Digital Partnerships for a Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from COVID-19, organized by the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations' agency for information and communication technologies, ICTs. This is a side event of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, being the core United Nations platform for follow-up and review of the 23rd Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Today we are joined by ten high-level speakers representing Member States, international and regional organizations, private sector, financing institutions, development agencies, academia, and of course, voice of you. Among them we'll hear today from representatives of the ITU, UNICEF, European Commission, Ethiopia, Estonia, Germany, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, World Bank, GSMA, and

Generation Connect Visionaries Board.

This session will be composed of two parts, opening statements and moderated discussion, that we are all looking forward to.

Just to remind, this session will be held in English and will benefit from the captioning.

And now, dear ladies and gentlemen, without further ado, please let me introduce Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin, the Director of the ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau, who is the host of today's meeting, as well as the moderator. Ms. Bogdan-Martin, handing over the floor to you for the official opening of the meeting as well as moderate of the discussion. The floor is yours.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you so much, Jaroslaw. Excellencies, distinguished speakers, colleagues, participants, good morning, good afternoon, good evening, and welcome to ITU's high-level political event on Digital Partnerships for a Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from COVID-19.

This year's HLPF is focused on policies and international frameworks that will help to mitigate the devastating social and economic impact of the pandemic and recoup much of the ground that has been lost in our efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

As the UN specialized agency for information and communication technologies, ITU is central to these discussions. Alongside our sister agencies, we are playing a leading role in the rollout of the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, and of course, we are also the lead facilitator in the continued ongoing WSIS process to implement the Tunis Plan of Action that emerge from the World Summit on the Information Society back in 2005.

ITU data shows that 3.7 billion people remain unconnected, not connected to the transformational power of the Internet. At the same time as COVID has dramatically accentuated our dependency on technology, it has also underlined the fact that a gap between digital haves and have-nots is something that the world simply can no longer tolerate. In his recent vision statement for his second term, the UN Secretary-General lamented the colossal divide that reinforces social divisions. We cannot simply wait and watch while this digital divide becomes the new face of global inequality. ITU estimates that around \$430 billion will be needed to connect the world's unconnected over the next ten years, and this huge investment in network deployment will also need to be similarly matched by huge investments in developing human capacity so that people are empowered to take advantage of connectivity as and when it becomes available.

It's clear that a challenge of this scale is not something that any single entity, be it a government or a company, is going to be able to achieve on its own. Strong commitments by national leaders and the private sector, efficient public interventions, and effective partnerships will be key to meeting this goal.

Last year I noted that every single participating country included ICTs in their voluntary national reviews, their VNRs, which is a dramatic change from the situation just five years ago, when the potential of technology was too often overlooked. So I think

it's safe to say that there is no longer any doubt that digital technologies are our only hope of getting back on track to achieve the 17 SDGs by 2030. Innovative, multistakeholder digital partnerships are the vital enabler that we need for an ICT-driven sustainable, resilient economic recovery. ITU's Connect2Recover initiative aims exactly to do this. With the support of the Governments of Japan and Saudi Arabia, we are working with countries to strengthen their digital resilience and to help countries build back better with broadband.

Other ITU members work to harness the power of digital to advance the SDGs includes our Giga initiative with UNICEF and my friend, Fayaz, who is with us today. We are working with others to connect every school on the planet to the Internet and every child to information opportunity and choice.

Our PRIDA initiative with the European Union to strengthen policy frameworks in Africa. Our Financial Inclusion Global Initiative with The World Bank to develop and promote digital financial services. Our new I-CoDI, International Center of Digital Innovation, focusing on innovative digital solutions for the SDGs. Our GovStack initiative with Estonia and Germany and the Digital Impact Alliance to promote scalable eGovernment solutions in developing countries. And our EQUALS global partnership that we spearhead with GSMA and others and that was highlighted last week at the Generation Equality Forum brings together over a hundred partners from around the world to bridge the digital gender gap. And, of course, our new Generation Connect youth initiative that's bringing the vital voice of young people into our digital development work.

In addition to these and other projects, last week at Mobile World Congress, where I had the pleasure to go physically, I was proud to announce Partner2Connect, the new digital coalition that we have launched which is a multistakeholder lanes to accelerate digital transformation in the hardest-to-connect communities, including LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDs. And I hope that many of you that are connected today will join us in this new journey so that Partner2Connect can take advantage of the rising tide of political will around connectivity and the transformational technologies already ready for deployment, which together could make a difference to the people most in need.

Ladies and gentlemen, the outcomes of today's discussions will also serve as an important input to the forthcoming World Telecommunication Development Conference that will be held next year in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in June. COVID has emphasized the urgency of our task, and our WTDC, I believe, gives us the chance to come together, to collaborate, to innovate, and to invigorate our efforts to bridge the digital divide. I hope all of you will join us there so that we can leverage the untapped power of digital partnerships to deliver on our sustainable development pledges.

With that, ladies and gentlemen, we will begin our exciting panel discussion, and I am really thrilled to have an esteemed group

of panelists joining us today, this evening, from Geneva. I will not give lengthy introduction of each of our esteemed panelists. Their bios are on the website. I would like to begin with my colleague and friend, phi I can't see King. S the deputy director of UNICEF, who we have the pleasure of working with on our giga project. Over to you, please.

>> FAYAZ KING: Thank you, Doreen, for the introduction and for the invitation to join this panel of impressive colleagues. Your combined commitment to and leadership in technology for development is highly inspirational.

COVID-19 is the first truly global crisis we have seen in our lifetime. The pandemic has affected every person, most especially children. It has widened inequalities with millions missing out on basic health services, education, and protection simply because they were born into poverty. And we feel the social, economic, and health impacts of this crisis for years to come. The impacts to children will be astounding, bringing the largest mass disruption of education in the history affecting a generation.

At its peak in April 2020, more than 190 countries instituted countrywide closures, resulting in 1.6 billion learners being out of school. At great cost to the education and future. The World Bank estimates a loss of \$10 trillion in earnings over the lifetime of this current generation of children if we fail to address the global learning crisis.

But now is not the time to stop. We have the opportunity to reimagine what is possible. We have the opportunity to build back better and transform our countries. We can come out and restore peace, recover and rebuild, and cooperate to transform the globe.

UNICEF's Reimagining Education is revolutionizing learning and skills development to provide quality education for every child through five critical activities; namely, digital learning, Internet connectivity, devices, affordable data, and the engagement of young people. One of the key pillars of that global Reimagine Education initiative is Giga. This was launched in 2019 by ITU and UNICEF. Giga is an ambitious global effort to connect every school to Internet. With access to the Internet, every child, young person, and the entire community can access information, opportunity, and choice.

Schools are not only places where young people go to learn. They represent the core of communities, where people gather in solidarity, whether as hubs for community activities or for emergency relief and protection. For Giga, a school is a focal point, not only for us to ensure we reach every child, but also as a countable unit that serves as a basis for aggregating demand and crafting sustainable financial models.

As we face this global crisis, we face bigger needs of making digital learning an essential service. It's about pooling our resources together to connect children and young people to the Internet so that they both participate in and shape the digital future. Let us continue our accelerated progress through Giga and

become an example of digital empowerment. Together we can connect every school and community so they can access a world of opportunity and create a brighter future for themselves, for their nations, and tomorrow's innovators, entrepreneurs, and leaders.

Thanks, Doreen. Back to you.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you so much, Fayaz. And a brighter future is I think what we all hope for. Thank you so much for that.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'd now like to invite Carla Montesi. Carla is the Director of the Green Deal and Digital Transformation with the European Commission Directorate for International Partnerships. Carla, the floor is yours. Over to you.

>> CARLA MONTESI: Thank you. Thank you very much, Doreen, and allow me to start saying congratulations for the organization of this important dialogue, and it's clearly a pleasure and an honor for me to participate in this panel.

I think that as Fayaz just mentioned, the COVID-19 crisis has underlined the importance of digital tools and technologies in facing global challenges. The pandemic has proven the importance of digital technologies for the continuity of business and our lives, but at the same time, as already mentioned, it has posed new digital divides and dependencies.

From the European Union, our ambition, more relevant than ever, is to pursue digital policies that empower people and business --

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Carla, I think --

>> CARLA MONTESI: -- data protection, and ethical use of digital technology.

Can you hear me, Doreen?

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Yeah, I lost you for a couple of seconds.

>> CARLA MONTESI: Hello? Okay. So sorry. I open the line. I will continue. Not sure that the line is very good, but allow me to say that clearly, the European Union is committed to human-centered Digital Agenda, to work on this agenda with international organizations, and creating strong international digital partnerships with our partners.

And I think, really, that the best way is to share best practice and experience with all the action between governments, international, regional organizations, civil society, private sector, and also only, I will say, sharing this best practice and experience that we can really make a difference.

Allow me to mention one of the successful examples that we can give. It's our digital partnership in the Policy and Regulation Initiative for Digital Africa. It's PRIDA, a joint initiative of the African Union, European Union, and ITU. It's an action, a project, a program that focuses on African continent and aiming to reap the benefit of digitalization and really to build the capacity of African Union Member States in the Internet Governance space. The intention is clearly the political and regulatory framework for the use of ICT for social and economic development. And also emphasis

on boosting the spectrum market across Africa. It's really an important program because on one hand, support the African digital transformation strategy that was adopted last year, and on the other hand, it allows to work with the African Union on policy recommendation, on digital solutions to trade and share information about the pandemic.

And this successful spectrum management for us is really a key element for a successful digital transition and digital recovery because it clearly creates a telecommunication network that we support different online applications that will reveal to be essential. So allow me to take this opportunity also to congratulate all the partners that are involved in this project, in this program, for their commitment. Allow me to say that, of course, this is a program that was focusing on COVID-19 and on digital, but we have -- the future is digital, so COVID-19 has created a momentum for the digital in many, many sectors for, really, transformation of our society and the economics. But allow all us in this panel really to join forces to foster a human-centric digitalization. And beyond the health that was our first experience altogether, we really need to turn the challenges into opportunities, to continue to work, as Fayaz was suggesting, to build back better a green, sustainable, and digital future.

I stop here, Doreen. Many thanks to you.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you so much, Carla. That's a great message, and indeed, the future is digital, and as you said, we need to have that human-centered approach to the Digital Agenda. Thank you for that.

Ladies and gentlemen, I mentioned our upcoming World telecommunications development Conference, and I am delighted to be joined today by State Minister of Ethiopia, His Excellency Dr. Ahmedin Mohammed, our host and chair-designate. Dr. Ahmedin, over to you, please.

>> AHMEDIN MOHAMMED: Thank you. Thank you. Dear Excellencies, speakers, and ladies and gentlemen, I am honored and excited to be part of this distinguished panel. I believe these types of forums will help us devise a strategy and help us tackle what we will be focusing on, which is a sustainable and resilient recovery from COVID-19.

As has been said repeatedly, COVID-19 has hit the world hard. We are still experiencing the shock and finding a way out from the devastating impact of the pandemic. Unfortunately, we will deal with the long- and short-term impact of the pandemic for some time to come. The setback from COVID-19 has also affected the progress made towards the SDGs. The pandemic has backtracked some progress made. The pandemic has decreased economic activities, led to income reduction. The impact of COVID-19 also goes beyond economic impact, which I have just mentioned. The impact has been felt on health and health facilities, in the quality of education, in gender equality, economic growth, and equality. We would say we have recognized connectivity is an essential part of the digital economy in people's

lives. We have the knowledge and understanding on the role of information community technology in the recovery process from the devastating impact of COVID-19; however, all our efforts, knowledge, and existing strategies are currently challenged by the lack of connectivity. The fact is that half of the globe is not yet connected heavily drags the progress made so far and our plans we make in the future.

It is also a sad and complex reality that many among the unconnected are women and girls, elders, people with disabilities, Indigenous population, and the economically disadvantaged.

Excellencies, speakers, ladies and gentlemen, the theme of WTDC that will be held in my country, Ethiopia, on June 2022, is connecting the unconnected to achieve sustainable development. This has the core issue of connectivity and sustainable development at its center. As you well know, the issue of connectivity cannot be addressed in isolation. Partnership, capacity building should be forged among development, developmental institutions, and the private sector. ITU's Partner2Connect clearly outlines the road. It has displayed partnership's role in advancing connectivity and achieving the SDGs and how we can achieve inclusivity and what should be done in achieving the goals.

As a country, we have learned that fast-tracking the digital transformation and achieving digital economy is critical in sustainable and resilient recovery from COVID-19 and for the achieving inclusive prosperity. In this regard, Ethiopia is undertaking a series of reforms and implementing different strategies that can fast-track the efforts to digitally transform its economy. However, Ethiopia recognizes the importance of partnership to connect as a much more critical and determining factor for the core development agenda. Ethiopia is working with different partners at The World Bank, the European Union, other key partners in the areas of digital transformation and ICT development. We are also working with countries such as Estonia, UAE, and other countries to achieve our digital economy vision by 2025. My government believes partnerships that are strategic, action oriented, and inclusive, that are based on first mutual understanding and collaborative spirit are critical in our path to inclusive global development that will benefit everyone. I thank you for helping us achieve our goal in this regard. Thank you again.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you so much, Dr. Ahmedin, and for stressing the importance of partnerships, which is the theme for our discussion today. And of course, you mentioned Estonia. Now I am going to turn to our next speaker. Last week we heard the Prime Minister of Estonia reiterating their commitment to closing the digital divide. It's my pleasure to turn to Her Excellency, Nele Leosk, Ambassador for Digital Affairs.

>> NELE LEOSK: Thank you very much for having me in this panel. I would like to start by congratulating all of us for having to embrace this challenge that COVID-19 has imposed. Because we have made impossible, at times, possible. A lot of connections have been made.

We have switched into remote working. We have managed to continue education and healthcare. So a lot of what we have been talking about over the past 20 years, we said in review also here today, I believe we realized it is possible also within a much shorter time.

But what this pandemic also showed us -- and I believe this is also one of the reasons for several partnerships that have emerged from this pandemic, is actually the realization that we are quite similar. We, as governments, as companies, as people all over the world suddenly faced the same problems. Our kids were all at home, but they needed to continue education. We needed to continue healthcare despite not being recommended even to go to a doctor. And when we looked at the solutions, we also realized that these are all similar too. Probably the applications around the world in Singapore, Estonia, Ethiopia, and the rest of the world were quite similar. So this sort of, I believe, gave impact of partnerships that focus on the reuse of something that is already there, or perhaps improving, basing on each other's experiences, different information systems or solutions and applications. And I am very glad that Estonia is sharing but also learning through these partnerships that have been established. And of course, we are very grateful for International Telecommunication Union and others for the initiative that builds on these various experiences to build sort of reference digital architecture consisting of different components that then can be localized, reused in different settings, in different parts of the world.

And similar parallel initiatives are also taking place. Estonia is also collaborating in the Secretary-General's digital cooperation roadmap, the Digital Alliance, together with UNICEF, Norway, Sierra Leone, and also India, and here we see the similar trend. We are trying to promote the reuse of something which is already there and build on the experiences that we have had over the past 20 years in different continents.

But moreover, I am also glad to see that there is cooperation between in these different initiatives, and that may not have been always the case. So there are bridges between GovStack, Digital Public Goods Alliance, but also Digital for Development Hub that has also been initiated late last year where different countries also come together, puts resources together, their know-how together, and their experiences. So I am very much looking forward to the continuation of these trends that, unfortunately, the pandemic sort of boosted. So thank you very much.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you so much, Ambassador, and we are certainly grateful for our partnership on GovStack. And as you noted, we all face similar challenges, and we were able to kind of take those challenges and turn them into opportunities. The Digital Public Goods Alliance, of course, that you noted, and of course, the D4D Hub.

I want to invite Ingrid-Gabriela Hoven, the Managing Director in Germany. Ingrid, over to you.

Ingrid, you are muted.

>> INGRID-GABRIELA HOVEN: Thank you, Doreen. Many thanks to you for your kind introduction, and it's a really great pleasure for me to join this distinguished panel this evening.

As has been said, globally, the pandemic has really caused a huge economic slow-down with various restrictions, as just described by Ambassador Leosk, including movement as well as severely impacting the access of many, many people in the North and the South to basic social services. And this has triggered, of course, a huge demand for digital technology solutions, not only to respond to the health emergencies, but also to facilitate the continuity of economic activities and also to accelerate the economic recovery which is now needed. And we have now identified, actually, the huge potential that digital processes can provide to help people and to save lives.

But you have mentioned it in your introductory remarks, Doreen, we have to make sure that we leave no one behind, and the digital gap is growing. So digital infrastructure applications need to be accessible for all. We need to strive for equal opportunities also throughout this digital transformation. And since the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, actually, we got many, many demands from developing countries to support them for the national digital transformation processes and to help give them a hand to actually strive for a process for responsible data use. And this demand has increased significantly.

Therefore, for the German government and for GIZ as well, digital government has become a key priority. And as the host of the Global D4D Hub Secretariat, we are happy to see we now really create new partnerships to accelerate the innovation for digital solutions and its application and to support partner countries that are grappling with the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic.

Let me give you two examples. First, one on surveillance and management of the COVID pandemic. The SOMA software is a powerful tool for real-time monitoring and early detection of disease outbreaks through the collection of case-based data. And the implementation of SOMA is a great example of actually joint-joint learning, rolled out successfully in Ghana and Nigeria, the system was so impactful that it is now used in over -- in many, many other countries, including in Germany in some health institutions.

Secondly, with respect to the empowering of youth and in the field of education. With the so-called small development hack, a true team initiative with over 50 partners, we received thousands of ideas and incubated nine solutions that strengthened digital COVID-19 responses across the world. Through the digital youth marketplace, Yoma, another platform and partnership, we empowered more than 250,000 young people to date.

Let me come to a third great initiative, and Ambassador Leosk already alluded to it. Together with ITU, Estonia, the Digital Impact Alliance, Germany, they together as a group have founded the DIAL COVID initiative. This collaboration -- this is really unique so far -- aims to provide a global approach on digital public goods. Our vision is, the vision of this partnership, is that within five

years we can empower all governments, particularly those in low-income settings, LDCs, LLDCs, to own and drive for their digital future by themselves. And the approach is unique in the sense that actually it creates and elaborates on digital building blocks, and this is intended to provide those examples of components that then could be shared and applied in other countries. The uniqueness also applies on the approach, how these building blocks are being actually elaborated and innovated. It's done by multistakeholder approaches, so at the table sit experts, academia, NGOs, industry, and other agencies, and they work together to come to those unique solutions that can be scaled up. And then they are put, actually, online, and they become a digital good for everyone, open sources, open application, simply for the good of people and countries. And I think this is actually an effort that should be scaled up and should be joined by others because it actually turns the way into new direction because it provides a solution for scaled-up solutions.

Thank you.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you. Thank you so much, Ingrid, and thank you also for sharing this whole-of-government effort with our digital building blocks and also the point about the multistakeholder effort that put into creating those reusable digital building blocks. Thanks for that, Ingrid.

Now we are going to turn it our next speaker. We have with us Dr. Ali Alghamdi, who is with the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre in Saudi Arabia. Dr. Ali, I want to, of course, acknowledge the invaluable support of Saudi Arabia for our digital resilience efforts through our Connect2Recover initiative I mentioned previously and also your support to our Connecting Humanity study. Dr. Alghamdi, over to you, please.

>> ALI ALGHAMDI: Thank you very much, Doreen. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening. On behalf of the kingdom of Sawyer, allow me to express my gratitude for the opportunity to participate in this forum. This forum is important because it's dealing with digital partnership of sustainable and resilient recovery for COVID-19, which is the issue of this time.

Ladies and gentlemen, sometimes the world sends us reminders of what is important. The last 18 months remind us that digital technologies rooted in connectivity through the Internet sustain life, health, education, and economics. But even with this wide consensus on the importance of connectivity, nearly half of the world population remains unconnected to the Internet. Compounding COVID-19 impacts on socioeconomic activity are affecting progress on 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia believes that additional efforts are required to ensure fairness to developing countries. This must include access to affordable broadband, digital transformation of the governments and private sectors, and the great engagement in international policy-making fora. As such, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre, is proud of its partnership with ITU and contribution to the

Connect2Recover, which is the global initiative, which aims to reinforce the digital infrastructure and ecosystems of beneficiary countries and provide means of utilization of digital technologies such as eCommerce, remote learning, and telemedicine, to support sustainable and resilient COVID-19 recovery efforts.

Our support to Connect2Recover initiative is further encouraged by our belief in the importance of broadband development and our commitment to accelerate progress on Connect 2030 Agenda for Global Telecommunication, ICT Development, and 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is also proud of its contribution to, firstly, the Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion, which focuses on using digital and technologies to boost the financial well-being of youth, women, and SMEs with particular emphasis on developing countries; and secondly, the ITU ICT Development Fund for Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States.

Ladies and gentlemen, when the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hosted the G20 last year, these two issues were in front of our mind. Saudi Arabia was able to drive urgent international cooperation to overcome the impact of pandemic, including the building consensus with the Riyadh Declaration, which emphasized the role of digital technologies and strengthening economic recovery, noting secure and affordable connectivity as well as the need to support all, especially as well the need to support small- and medium-size enterprise and bridge the digital gender divide, among others.

Thank you very much, and I am looking forward for the discussion. Thank you very much.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you very much, Dr. Ali. We are so grateful for the partnership and also for stressing the outcome of the G20 and the Riyadh Declaration and the big push for universal, secure, and affordable connectivity. Thank you, sir.

So with the pandemic highlighting how access to finance has become increasingly intertwined with digital, I am very pleased to invite Buddy Buruku. Buddy joins us, she is a Senior Leader for Finance Competitiveness and Innovation, the Global Practice at The World Bank, for her opening statement. Buddy, over to you, please.

>> ROSEBUD BURUKU: Thank you very much, Doreen. Distinguished guests, it's my sincere pleasure to join this distinguished panel and all of you to discuss this important subject.

As you all well known, one of the most important outcomes of the digital transformation we have seen over the past few years has been the emergence of digital financial services, or DFS. ICT networks with broad coverage and reliable power have made basic mobile telephony services accessible and allowed DFS to proliferate far and wide. This infrastructure, coupled with an enabling policy and regulatory environment, has created an avenue for increased access to financial services for the previously unbanked. Indeed, as of 2017, 1.7 billion adults, roughly one in three people, did not have access to finance, even though two-thirds of those people had their own mobile phone. So clearly, there's a lot that we, both

singularly and in partnership, can and need to do to chip away at this deficit.

Access to finance is the first step towards economic mobility. It allows people to send and receive payments. Also, it opens the doors to other financial services, such as savings, credit, and insurance. Many of those being accessed through a mobile phone and paid for using mobile money.

As an example of DFS, please allow me to elaborate on the catalytic role of mobile money in particular. By 2020, there were over 850 million registered mobile money accounts across 90 countries, trans acting an estimated \$1.3 billion U.S. per day. That's no small feat. More, it has helped reduce the gender gap by reducing key barriers in financial inclusion in a way that has never been achieved by the traditional banking center. A study in Kenya found that access to mobile money reduced extreme poverty and increased savings among women-led households by over 20%. Though I wish it were the case, the digital path to financial access has not benefitted everyone equally, as we have already heard. Just as I have pointed out examples of how women are thriving, unfortunately, they also continue to lag as it relates to financial access, mobile phone ownership, and resilience. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, women have been shown to be twice as likely as men to lose their jobs and have disproportionately reported decreases in their income. The underlying gender gap in mobile phone ownership remains a challenge. Across low/middle-income countries, women are 8% less likely than men to own a mobile phone and 20% less likely to use the Internet on a mobile. This represents 300 million fewer women than men who use mobile Internet in these markets. A staggering figure. Finally, there remains a persistent 9% gender gap in financial inclusion.

In order to build inclusive COVID-19 responses and enable women's financial inclusion, as well as that of other groups such as youth and rural populations that are also disproportionately on the wrong side of the digital divide, we must do the following: Reduce the gender gap in mobile phone ownership; commit and collaborate to build enablers and drivers for digital finance, such as digital payments and digital IDs; gather such gender data to allow for evidence-based decisions; and hire, procure, and represent women as digital leaders and consumers.

The World Bank is very proud to have been part of the Financial Inclusion Global Initiative, or FIGI, where we worked in three countries and across three working groups to develop tools in the driving progress in these and other areas. What more, we are already seeing additional countries adopt these tools to their own contexts, to improve financial access overall. Even as FIGI comes to a close, we remain focused on supporting countries to build financial and digital infrastructures and implement the policies needed to achieve financial inclusion and build resilience in the face of a future which looks certain to include further instability and shocks.

I thank you for this opportunity to share and learn from the

rest of the panel, and from all of you listening across the world.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you so much, Buddy, and thank you also for being very specific about some of the actions that need to be taken from closing the digital gender gap to committing and collaborating to build the enablers, and of course, the importance of the data piece, the evidence-based, to help us in terms of the decision-making process. Thank you for that.

So ladies and gentlemen, now we are going to turn to Lucas. I have, just as I mentioned, returned from Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, and it does give me great pleasure to introduce Lucas Gallitto, who leads GSMA's work for Latin America. He is the head of the Americas region, and I would like to invite him to share his remarks. Lucas, over to you.

>> LUCAS GALLITTO: Thank you very much, Doreen, and thanks to the ITU for the invitation. It's an honor to be here today with such outstanding speakers from all over the world to discuss the critical role of ICT in the recovery from the global pandemic.

As the purpose of this session is to ensure us an inclusive digital transformation that helps economies and societies recover from the COVID-19 crisis, I would like to take a few seconds to say that just last week, as you mentioned, Doreen, I was -- we were -- in Barcelona for the comeback of Mobile World Congress. And the importance of working together across the whole digital ecosystem was definitely one of the key takeaways from the event.

As I mentioned during the ministerial program opening session at MWC, against the backdrops of the pandemic, it has never been more critical to convene the world's political, regulatory, and telecom leaders to discuss policies for a robust recovery and a targeted investment for the digital future.

I think it has been mentioned here by my predecessors, public-private cooperation is absolutely essential to fulfill the objectives of the Connect 2030 Agenda, and the pandemic has been a clear testimony of that.

We all know that as the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the world, social distancing and stay-at-home directives drove up an unprecedented surge in network traffic volumes. Connectivity then became the main tool to remain operational and in contact with medical professionals, work colleagues, and loved ones. Stakeholders worked together to ensure connectivity was not compromised by these unprecedented circumstances. So operators also took a wide range of responsive measures, not only adding extra capacity, but also providing customers cost-free, zero rate, access to essential websites and mobile money services, for example, as my colleague has just pointed out. So thanks to years of well-conducted investments, digital infrastructure proved to be resilient.

And also, because we were talking about public-private partnerships, governments and regulatory authorities took different temporary measures, including, for example, additional spectrum allocations and other measurements.

So moving forward, it's important that these measures can be

maintained and even strengthened, as connectivity will be as vital in the post-COVID world as it has been during the pandemic. So the right policy frameworks can strengthen digital infrastructure, foster innovation, and accelerate economic recovery.

So at GSMA Latin America, we recently launched the report titled "The opportunity for a digital and connected Latin America," in which we speak about exactly that. So I would like to briefly mention the four work areas highlighted in that report.

So number one is evolve regulatory frameworks and national policies. There is a need to look at efficiencies and eliminate regulation and historical policy frameworks that hinder the development of the sector.

Number two is foster dialogue between Congress, regulatory authorities, policymakers, and the private sector to create policies consistent with Digital Agendas.

Number three is build fiscal policy consistent with national connectivity objectives. Heavy tax burdens on some sectors have the potential to have an impact and discourage investment.

Number four, plan long-term policies focused on innovation, not state revenues.

On that note, and in the interest of time, I will end my opening statement here, and I look forward to sharing with all of you a bit more about GSMA's concrete involvement in digital partnerships, such as EQUALS, together with ITU, in my next intervention.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Terrific. Thank you. And we will come back to you for a second round. So thanks for highlighting, as you noted from your recent report, the importance of policy frameworks, the importance of dialogue, which, of course, is critical, the right fiscal policies, and of course, spectrum. Spectrum, spectrum, that's key. Great.

So now we are going to turn to Shalin. As I mentioned before, youth engagement has been something that's somewhat new for us at the ITU. We are quite excited about it, and we are pleased that we now have young people contributing their ideas through our new initiative called Generation Connect. And today we have one of our youth representatives with us. We have Shalin Jyotishi, who is a member of the Generation Connect Visionaries Board. Shalin, over to you.

>> SHALIN JYOTISHI: Thank you very much, Doreen. I am deeply honored and humbled to be here with you all, and thank you for your leadership and your moderation.

Many thanks also to my fellow panelists and all of you in the audience. I see some familiar names, and of course, new ones too, so the movement grows.

The advantage, I think, of being towards the end of this session is you are forwarded the opportunity to build on the incredible commentary of all the others, so I will make my remarks a bit brief.

As Doreen mentioned, my name is Shalin Jyotishi. I am from Washington, DC, where I serve as a Senior Policy Analyst covering education, labor, and digital technologies at New America, a think

tank and media platform based here in DC, and I am also honored to serve on the Generation Connect Visionaries Board, representing the NextGen voice during today's forum.

I would like to just briefly use my time to share a little bit about Generation Connect and actually invite each of you to join hands with us. In the Chat I will share some links for you all to connect and learn more.

So the ITU Youth Strategy has a really strong alignment with the vision and objectives of the UN Youth Strategy, Youth 2030, of course, and it's focused on working with and for young people, hence the engagement during today's session. The overarching initiative of the ITU youth strategy is Generation Connect, and Generation Connect is a board and an initiative comprised of many different countries and individuals that aims to engage global youth and encourage their participation as equal partners alongside the leaders of today's digital change. Many of which we have heard from today. Empowering young people with the skills and opportunities to advance their vision of a connected future is really integral for this work to work well.

The ITU and my colleagues on the Board have been working with members on the Board to align this strategy with the needs of the youth on the ground. Even here in Washington, DC, in one of the wealthiest, most developed nations in the world, I always like to remind audiences that even here in Washington, 25%, one-fourth, of our residents lack access to broadband, limiting the ability of youth, my neighbors, to secure access to education, employment, healthcare, and social connectedness in this pandemic year of isolation. So digital connectivity and digital skills is no longer nice to have. It's a need to have, and it is a need to have regardless of the nation at hand.

Resource mobilization and partnerships, of course, are integral to the achievement of Generation Connect's objectives, as we build towards the upcoming rural telecommunications development Conference in Addis Ababa and the preceding Generation Connect Youth Summit. On behalf of the Generation Connect's Visionaries Board, I invite all of you to partner with Generation Connect to really amplify the youth in your nations, in your regions, in your communities in the international digital development dialogue, particularly for our Youth Summit. If you are interested in engaging, please email us at generationconnect@itu.int, and I will share that email address in the Chat for all of the attendees. I will also just share an article that explains the Generation Connect group in more detail so you can get a sense of some of our work ahead.

I also, of course, invite you to reach out to us at New America, if we could be helpful in your efforts. We have advanced a great deal of research around the intersection between digital connectivity and digital skills, youth empowerment, and education attainment and are working closely with the Administration and policy community here to advance digital equitable future for American youth.

I will drop my information in the Chat if that would be of interest. There are many more things I could say, but for now, I will just thank you very much, Doreen, for your leadership and for the opportunity, and back to you.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you so much, Shalin, for that energizing intervention, and indeed, we do want to empower young people and give them -- help them get the skills and be able to take advantage of the opportunities to advance their visions. Thank you for that.

So I want to thank the panelists for that kind of setting the stage, and now we are going to come back to everyone for a question. So I am going to start first with Fayaz, if I may, Fayaz. Of course, ITU's collaboration with UNICEF I think is a sort of best practice action when it comes to inter-agency collaboration. And Fayaz, if you could share with us sort of your thoughts, how can we further increase the prominence of digital development within the UN system and stimulate more impactful partnerships? And I think we had said four minutes each, but I know we are short on time, and of course, the Euro starts in an hour, so we want to make sure everyone can see the game. Fayaz, if we can limit it to two, three minutes max, please, over to you.

>> FAYAZ KING: Excellent. Thank you, Doreen. Thank you so much for that.

Indeed, UNICEF's partnership with ITU is a tremendous example of the impact two agencies can bring when combining their respective talents and areas of expertise. Together we are able to better forge a connection between digital development and the empowerment of young people everywhere. It is something that neither one of us could accomplish at the same level of magnitude.

I believe it's also collaborations like ours or Giga that will allow us to reach heights within and across the UN system. It's also become very clear in the last few months as how Giga can build on UNICEF's work on reimagining education and youth's work on digital skills. This and the work with partners like Generation Unlimited and Digital Public Goods Alliance will also help ensure that digital learning content and platforms are available for scaling.

To this point, I think the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation made it clear that in both recommendation 1a and 1b to establish universal access connectivity and to create digital public goods to those who need them. As part of this effort, I think UNICEF co-created and now hosts the Digital Public Goods Alliance, and UNICEF will help foster and push this together with other UN agencies.

I think the lessons that we've learned here are only the beginning. Closing the digital divide requires global cooperation, leadership, and innovation across all types of partners in finance and technology.

That's it, Doreen. I think it sort of sums up where we are on this one. Thank you.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Excellent. Closing the divide needs

cooperation, leadership, and innovation. Very well said. Thank you, Fayaz.

So Carla, we are going to turn back over to you. We are seeing the European Commission really ramp up its international development efforts. Can you share with us how you see the Commission leveraging this big network of diplomatic missions and the European network of digital stakeholders and the Commission's presence in international organizations? How do you see the Commission leveraging this to increase more digital partnerships? Carla?

>> CARLA MONTESI: Yes. Many thanks, Doreen. Yes, absolutely. To go fast, I can confirm that clearly, digital is at the heart of our international partnership. It's clearly a priority with partners and action. And clearly, we want to leverage a large network of diplomatic commissions of the European Union and its Member States, but also create work with the strong network of digital stakeholders, including public and the private, as was already mentioned.

One example that I want to give is the Team Europe approach that was already mentioned. We launched a Team Europe global response to the COVID-19, where we were able to pull together the European Union institutions, Member States, financial institutions really to join forces in general, but also for the digital world.

An example of this work together was the Digital Development Habits, already mentioned by Nele, by Ingrid. It was a Digital Habits we launched with our President, but also with different European Head of States last December, and we really, with this Digital for Development Hub, we really want to create a strategic multistakeholder platform to create an international partnership, once again, to support this human-centric digital transformation, but what is very, very important is that we really want to push for a coordinated approach. So this hub offers a platform not only for action but also for dialogue and for a stronger coordination of European partners and our partners in the different countries in the world. So a big effort to coordinate our digital response around the world.

I would like to say in addition to what already Ingrid mentioned, that this hub is clearly a catalyzer of resources and expertise from Member States and from -- countries. In order to do that, we really need to mobilize different resources and to foster knowledge exchange that will be key.

This, of course, coordinated approach was essential, but allow me to say we really want to work also on different domains because it will be essential to ensure that digital is mainstreamed in thematic areas like, of course, health and education that was already mentioned, but also in the agricultural sector. So it will be essential to work and strengthen this digital partnership withinside Europe and with all the international organizations really to promote what we call an inclusive an environmentally friendly post-pandemic recovery. This is very much in line with our European Green Deal.

Over to you, Doreen.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Terrific. Thank you so much for that and for giving a call out for further dialogue and stronger collaboration and also this point about fostering knowledge exchange, which is so important. Thank you for that.

Dr. Ahmedin, back to you. It's a further opportunity to strengthen our partner to connect framework, hopefully with more concrete actions for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDs. Can you tell us how do you think that we can also build a greater multistakeholder approach that can benefit from diverse inputs? Over to you.

>> AHMEDIN MOHAMMED: Thank you, Doreen. Yes, the least developed countries we call LDCs. The land-locked developing countries, which are the LLDCs, and the small island developing states, which are the SIDs.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Dr. Ahmedin, did we lose you?

>> AHMEDIN MOHAMMED: As indicated in several studies, many LDCs have large land areas and rural population and are especially populated, which makes the rollout of the land communication infrastructure, which is related to connectivity, more difficult.

The second one is on the land-locked developing countries, which are the LLDCs, they lack direct access to the sea, and the other one, which is the small island developing states, they have their own numerous islands, and they often face high communication costs.

So as I mentioned earlier during my opening statement, it is difficult for these countries to avert this challenge alone. So the Partner2Connect framework will help these countries to take the challenge and foster digital connectivity, of course, in the hardest-to-connect communities.

Achieving the SDGs cannot be done in isolation. It requires a global partnership of multiple stakeholders, and I think that's why WTDC 22, which will be held in my country, Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, has identified the Partner2Connect framework, which works to ensure that people everywhere, in particular in LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDs, can access and use digital connectivity to transform lives, communities, and society in general.

So these efforts actually will ensure the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals through first connecting people everywhere; the second is empowering communities; the third one is on building digital ecosystems; and the fourth and the last one is on providing investments.

So I think I believe the postponement of the World Telecommunication Development Conference helps the agenda of the partners to connect by giving more time to -- the issues that must be discussed at the WTDC. Thank you very much.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you very much, Dr. Ahmedin, and for stressing the connecting people, empowering communities, as you noted, the importance of digital ecosystems, and of course, incentivizing investments. Thank you for that.

I am going to turn to Ambassador Leosk. Ambassador, there was a question that came in in the Q&A from the webinar. I wanted to ask you further about the GovStack piece, but I also wanted to ask

if you could perhaps comment on that, which is a question on cyber security and how we can tackle that in undereducated or illiterate people in the world, if you had thoughts on that. And of course, if there's other domains where we could create impactful partnerships. Over to you, please.

>> NELE LEOSK: Yes, thank you very much. I would start vice versa. I will first address the partnerships and the areas where we could still partner because perhaps at the beginning of my intervention, I was rather positive, directing towards the developments that have taken place in the past year. At the same time, actually, quite a bit is yet to be done, and when we look, for example, even comma is happening now or how governments are adopting or adjusting their present utilization systems to this new area, we can still see that we are all still in the process of searching for how to change our governance system, for example, how much to centralize, how much to decentralize, how to make sure that our budget and finances and procurement models are all supporting, let's say, the adoption of these reusable open-source components. And this is also very much related to cybersecurity. How do we guarantee that these reusable components coming from different parts are integrated with our security systems, for example? So all of these questions ought to be answered together. So this is definitely an area where we can learn from each other to see what has worked in one place and what not.

And to make sure, perhaps, concrete areas, when we look at finance sector, where the interoperability of our account numbers has been reached worldwide; whereas, we are still struggling with data standards or unifying our data standards across one organization or one government or why not even the region? So data standard is definitely one of these areas where we need to seek for global cooperation.

And the second area concerns identity. We can still see that in several instances, the identity issues have not been solved. And this, too, actually relates to security, how to guarantee that we trust each other, and of course, Europe has now the new amendment, and then we have some hopes for the improvement in Europe, but when we look at it in practice, then situation is actually completely different.

But coming to the question that was posted here by the panelists, it's actually a good question, and we were having a debate or a discussion on this today in Estonia with the teachers of social science in school to discuss how, for example, to introduce these topics even at the school level to make sure that our students know how to separate information and fake news and many other issues that are currently on the table of all of us. And I would say that we do not yet have one concrete answer or solution, but it is an ongoing process, and it needs to start as early on as possible. A quote I always like to use comes from my good colleague who says that I do not know a cyber security expert who has not hacked the games. So maybe the answer lies actually in our education and how we manage

to keep up our school curricula with these fast changes. Thank you very much.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Terrific. Thank you so much for that. As you noted, we still have a big job ahead of us, lots to do. We can learn from each other, and challenges remain from data governance and standards to identity, as you noted, security, and of course, fake news. So lots to do. Thank you so much for that, Ambassador.

Ingrid, I am going to turn to you. But we've been through GIZ as a close partner and equals. I wanted to ask you, from a donors or implementers perspective, what are the key elements that should be part of every new digital partnership for sustainable and resilient recovery? Ingrid, over to you.

>> INGRID-GABRIELA HOVEN: I have to unmute myself. Thank you, Doreen. I think first partnerships should really try to scale up the right things. And this is why setting standards and good practices for human-centered digital services is vital. It may be easily said, but it's not easily done. But it's a crucial thing. So focus on the right things.

Secondly, I would say that we have to support -- as partnerships, great new partnerships, you have to strive for whole-of-government approaches. Bring the right people to the table, try to reach out to other stakeholders, make sure that you really embrace the breadth of the challenge that is out there in the digital transformation.

What we observe in our partner countries, that they really struggle with a lack of coordination when it comes to the provision of digital public goods and services. And by the way, we are facing similar challenges in Germany as well. But quite frankly, many countries cannot afford nor have the time or luxury to reinvent the wheel or to invest in fragmented and duplicative initiatives.

And thirdly, I think we have really to make an extra effort in our new partnerships and initiatives to improve coordination and to focus much more on cross-sectoral and regional approaches rather than to support siloed solutions. So we have to reach out, make sure that the invest in whole-of-government approaches, and we really, really make sure that we address challenges that cut across sectors at country level. And I think partnerships should provide the platform to really do this job.

Thank you.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you so much, and again, for putting that emphasis on the human-centered piece, which I think is so important, not reinventing the wheel, and also looking across sector and regional approaches. Thank you. Those are really great points that you have mentioned.

We are going to turn to Dr. Ali. Dr. Ali, if you could share your views on how we can ensure that projects are really leveraging digital in these domains that we've been discussing and how they can be sustainable over time and actually drive change. Over to you.

>> ALI ALGHAMDI: Thank you, Doreen. Clearly that all the speakers, and I think most of us, believe in one thing. That's

cooperation and coordination of our efforts is the main point in sustaining and long-term -- I mean ensuring this process is going. COVID-19 brought us together. I hope this is the initial process of long-term cooperation and coordination between government and private sector, between different governments and between different organizations in either UN organizations or civilian organizations. These kind of projects, to be sustained and to be long-term, need continuous kind of initiatives like you are doing; need kind of such meeting, also, to keep discussing the obstacles and difficulties that we are facing from time to time. Even the issue of cyber security discussions, through the process of sustaining this effort, I think we will come across sometimes an unexpected kind of cyber issues that we need to meet and discuss and tackle immediately. I think it is coordinated, it is -- can be done with continuous, joint efforts of different countries and different stakeholders.

The most important is I hope this issue of cyber security and other issues doesn't make us stand slow or sit back because most of the low-development countries, they are looking for the main things. They are like real education, health services, and maybe employment. So I think this can be done clearly now through having the sustainable digital efforts. I hope this will continue. I hope we will be with the same energy in future for continuing this kind of initiatives and projects. And it can be done. It can be done. It can be done. Thank you.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you. It can be done. Thank you for that upbeat message, and as you noted, we need to continue to engage and keep tackling those obstacles and difficulties until we get it right. Thank you so much.

I am going to turn to Buddy, and I am keeping track of time here, for my next speakers, if you can try to keep your response in two and a half minutes max.

Buddy, there was a point that came in from one of the participants about financial services for illiterate people. I don't know if you could comment on that and perhaps share some advice in terms of your experience on FIGI. Over to you, Buddy.

>> ROSEBUD BURUKU: FIGI leveraged a unique partnership between The World Bank Group, the ITU, Committee on Payments and Market Infrastructure, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to address many challenges in financial inclusion, including how to create the right environment for addressing vulnerable individuals who may not have the tools, such as literacy, to be able to take advantage of financial access. And some of the tools that have been developed actually speaking to that.

But I wanted to speak to another question that I think was inherent in that is about how you can address -- how DFS can be used more broadly than just giving access to financial services, but also creating synergies in other parts of lives of the vulnerable. And an example of this is how DFS has been sort of used -- digital financial services companies have partnered with solar companies to use money to get access to kerosene-fueled energy. Or it has

provided access to telehealth services in a way that both minimizes the downside risk of being poor, having poor living environment, but also gives them access to insurance and other measures that can help them actually to improve the upside of their lives.

So I would say that it's really important to highlight the synergies that the telecom sector can realize by working with financial service providers and other providers in agriculture, education, health, and energy in order to generally take advantage of the opportunities to improve the lives of the poor.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Terrific. Thank you. And that's a great link to connect the digital financial services to energy, as you noted, agriculture, health, education, and other sectors. Thank you for that, Buddy.

Lucas, I am going to come to you. With do you see the sort of engagement beyond infrastructure? What do we need to do more of? Over to you, Lucas.

>> LUCAS GALLITTO: Thank you, Doreen.

So I will try to make as short as possible. So in 2016, the mobile industry was the first large industry to publicly commit to the SDGs, and we were talking about EQUALS in my previous intervention, so in relation to SDG 5 on gender equality, we cofounded the EQUALS Global Partnership for Digital Equality alongside the ITU, UN Women, ITC, and the UN University. So as part of EQUALS, we lead on activities that provide digital skills training to girls and young women, including Tech4Girls workshops and a mentorship platform. Our own Connected Women program also continues to work with operators to reduce the gender gap in mobile Internet and mobile money services in low- and middle-income countries and unlock significant commercial and social economic opportunities. So SDG 5 will continue to be a priority for the GSMA, driving diversity and inclusion efforts. In fact, GSMA's work within the framework of the women for tech program laid the foundations for the recent launch of the GSMA program in Barcelona, and the program aims to expand the conversations to include the undisputable case for diversity and inclusion in business. So also to probably two things. One on SDG 13, on climate action, another critical point of focus for the industry and GSMA. So the sector is tackling action to be fully transparent about the industry's own climate emissions and has developed an industrywide climate action roadmap. Secondly, GSMA drives responsible leadership via a digital declaration, which is a program that united CEOs from across sectors were committed to acting ethically in the digital area and delivering what matters most to digital citizens, industry, and governments. So hopefully I was quickly enough in my intervention.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you. Thanks. Perfect. Focusing on diversity, the mobile money piece you mentioned, the digital gender divide, SDG 5 and of course, SDG 13 as well. Thank you for that.

I am going to come back to Shalin. In your view, what would be some ways in which we could strengthen the involvement of youth

in new digital partnerships? Over to you.

>> SHALIN JYOTISHI: Brilliant question, Doreen.

You know, there's a need to focus on equipping youth with the skills needed to leverage the full potential of ICTs. Access in and of itself, in addition to quality and reliable and ethically designed access to ICTs, is step one. But there's a difference between youth using social media and playing video games and using ICT to grow one's self economically and in terms of health and education, as Buddy shared, in other ways. We typically don't hand someone a car when they have come of age and tell them to figure out how to drive and use the car to improve their lives. So why would we do the same with ICTs?

In the interest of time, I will emphasize one specific idea to maximize the presence of youth around this sort of digital skills piece of the equation. The first is to pressure test digital skills efforts before they are implemented with youth in your nation and pull on youth from the most disadvantaged parts of the nation, state, community, whichever group that we are focused on, and not from just the wealthiest parts or the most accessible parts or from the best universities or for the most well-connected youth. This equitable user-centered design will ensure that the floor is high enough to accommodate all of the youth in the region and not just the needs of the wealthy, which, as I mentioned, is a challenge that we are painfully grappling with here in America. I shared a bit earlier, Washington, DC, home of Amazon HQ, and yet 25% of our residents don't have broadband access. This is what happens.

Advisory boards and structures help and could be expanded, but using the principles of co-design -- I will drop a booklet in the Chat, if I might -- is also a strategy that governments and companies and public-private partners can use to substantively engage youth without compromising bandwidth or resource constraints. There's a certain way to engagement that I believe works really well, and there's been evidence in Australia and other places with respect to co-designed around public interest technology. So those are two thoughts that come to mind, Doreen. Thank you very much.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you so much for that.

I am going to ask my colleague, Jaroslaw, is there time left to go back to a colleague?

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Absolutely, for one colleague, we have time.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: If you can stay with us for a few minutes, asking you, keeping it short in Twitter style, how can we mobilize others to commit to digital partnerships for a sustainable and resilient recovery from COVID? Fayaz, can I start with you?

>> FAYAZ KING: Thanks, Doreen. COVID-19 has made the digital divide even more evident and has changed the world permanently, making connectivity and digital public goods even more important as a prerequisite to achieving the SDGs at 2030. That's why UNICEF, through Giga and through Digital Public Goods Alliance, will convene a broad range of stakeholders and close the digital divide by empowering young people through access to information

opportunity and choice. Thank you, Doreen.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Terrific. Thank you. Carla, over to you.

>> CARLA MONTESI: Many thanks. It's really that we have really big challenges. As Lucas already mentioned, digital action requires strong investment up front, and we know that this field is dominated by the private sector. So for us, what is really very, very important, that we succeed to scale up investment together with the private sector. So private sector will be key in our digital development, and the dialogue with the private sector, but we have also foreseen new financial instruments to leverage investment from the private sector. So private sector will be key if we really want to make progress.

Over to you, Doreen.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Terrific. Dr. Ahmedin, over to you.

>> AHMEDIN MOHAMMED: Thank you, Doreen. I think it is really important to be creating continuous discussion platforms, play significant role to keep sharing ideas among main actors while helping us to formulate actionable plans for sustainable recovery from the pandemic. Thank you, Doreen.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Terrific. Thank you.

And Leosk, over to you.

>> NELE LEOSK: Thank you. I believe the answer lies in why digital Tare higher in politics, higher than ever before, and this is actually related to the fact that these technological developments that support our societies, our economies, may not necessarily, as was also said, happen in the government, but they may not even happen in our countries. So this means that in order to keep up with these developments and to be able to make sure that we know how to use them and we have the right skills to use these technologies for our benefit, for this we need to partner and we need to partner with each other, we need to partner with international organizations, but also, as it was also said, it was also the private sector that may not be located in our own countries but where the digital developments and these trends do take place. So this, I believe, also pushes us for collaboration more than ever before.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Terrific. Thank you.

Ingrid, over to you. Ingrid?

>> INGRID-GABRIELA HOVEN: Here I am. Thank you.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Go ahead.

>> INGRID-GABRIELA HOVEN: I think the key message should be digital transformation is absolutely key for making our economy and society more resilient. This is more needed than ever after COVID-19.

Additionally, we have to be more inclusive in our approaches, especially for local ecosystem players. We have to bring in local digital startups, civil society organizations, youth organizations, on the ground, we have to bring them on board and strengthen local ownership for this long-term change that we have to invest in. And I think then we have a good chance that sustainability of the digital

transformation is assured.

Thank you.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Terrific. Thank you for that.

Dr. Ali, over to you.

Dr. Ali, did we lose you?

>> ALI ALGHAMDI: Doreen?

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Please, Dr. Ali. Yeah.

>> ALI ALGHAMDI: I said really with what's happened during COVID-19, it is important to feel that the digital need, need for technology, it is a necessity, not any more just for fun or something like that. I mean, for this investment, this is the main route, and it should be part of humanitarian aid also, to support people's education, health, and having work and jobs. Thank you very much.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Terrific. Thank you. And Buddy, over to you.

>> ROSEBUD BURUKU: I think, given all the initiatives that we have all been involved with, if we share our lessons and share our successes, there's probably nothing that will be more successful at crowding and other partners that want to see the same outcomes. So I think engaging and sharing information in order to amplify will be critical.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Terrific. Thank you for that. And Lucas, to you.

>> LUCAS GALLITTO: Thank you, Doreen. So committing to digital partnership is not just the right thing to do; it makes good business sense too. The COVID-19 recession hit us all, and a fast and inclusive recovery will benefit all of us. We should take the public-private collaboration we saw at the outbreak of the pandemic as a blueprint for the future. That would be my reflection, Doreen.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Terrific. Thank you.

Shalin, over to you.

>> SHALIN JYOTISHI: I think that was a great comment Lucas made with respect to sort of using an all-hands approach. The one thing I might add as well is a healthy dose of competition can be encouraging. When we all race to the top, that's something that I think we wouldn't want to lose in this discussion. Having an Apollo-like challenge can be really encouraging to achieve the goals that we all have set out. So at some level, definitely sharing of knowledge and information and tools and strategies, but at another level, using maybe even grand challenge, like price strategies, to incentivize others who haven't been in the woodwork to get in the game is something that we've done in the States with NASA and other groups in the past.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Terrific. Thank you so much for that. So ladies and gentlemen, this brings us to the end of our session. I want to thank all of my amazing panelists. It's really been a great discussion. I think some of the highlights for me, this has been an opportunity to kind of reimagine through all of your interventions what is possible, but I also heard that we still need to work more towards equal opportunities so that digital is accessible to all.

That means we need to urgently address the global learning crisis. We heard that. Bridging the digital gender divide is critical. And also ensuring digital inclusion of persons with disabilities, the economically disadvantaged, people in remote communities, and those who are being left behind. So removing barriers to digital financial inclusion is also key to their empowerment. It will be important, of course, to involve youth, their perspectives, their actions, that co-designing element that Shalin mentioned, the importance of skilling is also critical. And we heard that we need to move forward in this human-centric approach. We've got to keep people at the center as we advance with our digital transformation agendas. We have made great progress. I think COVID has been a big accelerator, a boost for digital issues. But we need to continue. We are not done. Lots of challenges remain. We need to think about whole-of-government approaches, multistakeholder approaches. They will help us to leverage things like digital building blocks that we heard about today. Of course, the importance of public-private partnerships, the right policy frameworks, fiscal policies, spectrum, and of course, sharing experiences, lessons, cooperatition, I like that, and of course, none of this can be done alone. I think if there was one takeaway that's clear from today, we can't do this alone. We need each other. We need to move forward together. And Fayaz, to borrow from what you mentioned, we need a brighter future, and I think a brighter future is on the horizon through cooperation, leadership, and innovation. So thank you, everyone. I want to, of course, invite you all to join us in our Partner2Connect digital coalition as we expand our reach to the hardest-to-reach communities, especially LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDs. Again, our thanks to all of our partners for their engagement. We look forward to continuing to strengthen the collaboration. With that, ladies and gentlemen, we have 20 minutes until the final competition of the Euro. Really, thank you all. Stay safe, stay healthy, and look forward to seeing you all soon. Thank you very much.

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