

# Expert Group Meeting on the ITU Index

ITU Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland

10 February 2020

## SUMMARY REPORT

1. The Expert Group Meeting on the ITU index took place in Geneva, Switzerland, on 10 February 2020. The meeting attracted 89 participants from 37 Member States, along with Resolution 99 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), ITU-D Associates and experts in the field of ICT development. Of this number, 65 were remote participants. In terms of gender distribution, there were 39 female and 48 male participants (and 2, who selected “other”). Mr Alexandre Barbosa, head of the Regional Center for Studies on the Development of the Information Society (Cetic.br), Brazil, chaired the meeting.
2. The objective of the meeting was to present a proposal to ITU Member States for the development of a new composite index, linking digital technologies to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A background document was circulated ahead of the meeting, which proposed a framework that aims to map digital technologies to the 5P structure commonly used for the SDGs - people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. The new index takes a forward-looking and broader perspective compared to the ICT Development Index (IDI), and recognizes the pivotal role of digital technologies in other sectors in the digital ecosystem, from health to education, business, government, employment, agriculture, gender, and poverty alleviation. It brings together a wide range of comparable data not only from ITU, but also from other international agencies. ITU will rely on its established collaborations under the framework of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development.
3. Ms Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau, opened the meeting and highlighted that the beginning of the Decade of Action announced by the UN Secretary-General presents the right time to introduce a new index that reflects the importance of ICTs for achieving the SDGs. A more holistic approach of the index enables the ITU to deliver better on its core mission of promoting, facilitating and fostering ICT networks, services and applications and their use for social, economic and environmentally sustainable growth and development. Ms Susan Teltscher, Head a.i. of the ICT Data and Analytics Division, presented the background document. This was followed by an open discussion with the participants.
4. Participants widely welcomed the proposal of the ITU Secretariat to develop and publish a new ITU index that is based on the SDG framework, which will provide a monitoring tool for governments to assess how digital transformations may impact their ability to achieve the SDGs. Questions were raised about the possibility of also calculating the IDI according to the revised methodology of 2017. However, there was a general agreement that due to the persistence of conceptual and data problems, the IDI will no longer be produced. Rather, a fresh and forward looking approach is required that will take into consideration the widespread technological changes and the cross-cutting nature of digital technologies impacting on all sectors of the economy as countries move towards digital transformation.

5. The Chair lauded the fact that the approach taken for the development of the new SDG-based index foresees partnerships and the use of data from different types of statistical sources, which are aligned with the principles of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, which was adopted by the UN Statistical Commission in 2017. This Action Plan, among others, recommends Governments to modernize the governance of institutional frameworks and statistical standards and facilitate data integration, data exchange and the use of new data sources.
6. The ITU Secretariat will liaise with partners from the UN statistical community as well as those engaged in the discussion of ICT for development, within the UN family and beyond (such as the OECD), the research and academic community in the process of the development of the index.
7. Questions were also raised during the discussion about the specific sub-indices and indicators that would populate the index. It was explained that the aim of the present meeting was to agree on the concept and the roadmap for the development of the index. In order not to repeat the process of the IDI revision (which was unsuccessful), the index development process will follow internationally recommended standard procedures and begin with the development and agreement of the conceptual framework. Due to the complex and multidimensional nature of composite indices, the identification of possible quantitative and qualitative indicators will come at a later stage and will have to correspond to the framework and objectives of the index. They will only be finalized after rigorous statistical procedures and a number of statistical tests have been completed, to ensure coherence, relevance, data availability and quality as well as global comparability, which are issues many participants highlighted as important.
8. It was emphasized that data used for the new index will not present an additional burden on Member States, as the index will rely on statistics collected through the established ITU surveys and from other international agencies.
9. Some questions addressed the implications of changing the IDI which is used as a component in other composite indices – specifically, the Global Innovation Index published by WIPO. The ITU Secretariat noted that WIPO was consulted about the intended revision of the index. Other global indices use ITU data published in the WTI database, which will not be impacted by the new index.
10. Several noteworthy proposals were made about features of the index, such as the name of the index, the frequency of publication, the possibility to combine the 2019 and 2020 editions, the renaming of pillars (e.g. peace to public governance), the possibility to take into account differences between LDCs and advanced economies, or the avoidance of producing rankings in order to avoid competition (in the spirit of the SDGs). These suggestions will be considered during the development of the index. The ITU Secretariat will also explore potential implications for Resolution 131 that may need to be taken onboard in preparation of the next Plenipotentiary Conference.
11. Many participants raised questions on how Member States would be part of the process to develop the new index emphasizing the importance of informing and consulting with Member States throughout the process, ensuring transparency. A roadmap was presented and agreed, which foresees continuous interaction between the Secretariat, Member States and experts at different stages of the index development process (see Annex 1).

## Annex 1: Proposed way forward

28 January 2020	Brainstorming with potential partners
10 February 2020	Expert Meeting with Member States to discuss new proposals
February - March 2020	Finalizing conceptual framework Initial checking of data availability and description of quality profile of available indicators
March 2020	Second brainstorming with partners Sharing of draft concept with Member States Present concept to TDAG for discussion (remote participation)
March - May 2020	Methodology preparation, data collection/compilation, preliminary indicators testing
15-17 April 2020	Present progress at WTIS
17 April 2020	Expert Meeting with Member States to present and discuss the draft index framework/methodology (half day, remote participation) (relevant document will be shared with Member States in advance)
June - July 2020	Calculation of the index, sensitivity analysis, finalization of indicators, data and results
June 2020	Present draft index methodology to Council for discussion (relevant document will be shared with Member States in advance)
July – September 2020	Drafting/analysis
Second half 2020	Launch of the new Index