



**ITU WTDC**  
**BAKU2025**

**17–28 November 2025**  
**Baku, Azerbaijan**

# **BAKU DECLARATION**

***Universal, meaningful and affordable connectivity for an inclusive and sustainable digital future***

We, the representatives of ITU Member States endorse the present Declaration at the ninth World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-25), which took place in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, from 17 to 28 November 2025 under the theme of universal, meaningful and affordable connectivity for an inclusive and sustainable digital future.

We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the global development community and to promoting our shared objective of driving environmentally sustainable and equitable digital transformation and inclusive growth globally, building on the outcomes of WTDC-25 and recent United Nations processes and conferences.

We recognize the progress achieved in advancing information and communication technologies (ICTs) and digital development across all regions; however, persistent challenges and disparities continue to hinder universal, meaningful and affordable connectivity, within countries and across countries, particularly in developing countries, least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and small island developing states (SIDS). We therefore reaffirm our determination to address these through enhanced international cooperation and continued engagement in the work of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU D).

Mindful of the challenges and opportunities of digital transformation, we declare the following:

- i) **We are cognizant that telecommunications/ICTs, including new and emerging technologies, are drivers of socio-economic prosperity and sustainable development across national, regional and global telecommunication/ICT ecosystems.**

Universal and meaningful connectivity is a critical priority towards the achievement of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Networks, platforms, tools, data, and digital innovation create opportunities for improving livelihoods, enhancing governance and supporting entrepreneurship.

- ii) **We are deeply concerned that approximately one-third of the global population**

remains offline and those affected are disproportionately concentrated in developing countries, including LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, where there is an urgent, pressing need for investment in connectivity infrastructure. Connectivity gaps persist across rural, remote and underserved areas. Among those that are covered by broadband networks, there is a vast 'usage gap' in telecommunication/ICT services which is determined by barriers such as limited affordability and access to Internet-enabled end-user devices, lack of digital skills and relevant local content, and by challenges in attaining multilingualism on the Internet and other challenges for a reliable, safe and secure online experience, which continues to affect the vast majority of those who remain offline. The advancement of new and emerging technologies in telecommunications/ICTs, if not accompanied by investment, capacity building, and knowledge-sharing initiatives, risks further deepening digital divides.

- iii) **We acknowledge that against the backdrop of global challenges, rapid technology developments present unprecedented opportunities for building economic and ecological resilience.** Ecological disasters and natural hazards have adverse impacts that are disproportionately felt by developing countries, and addressing these challenges involves advancing policies and technologies that promote resilience and resource-efficient digitalization. Acknowledging the principles reaffirmed by some Member States at the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29) and in the ITU's Green Digital Action initiative, we also encourage the broader deployment of telecommunication/ICT solutions to enhance climate action, emergency monitoring, disaster response and early warning systems, and to drive improvements in energy efficiency through digital innovation.
- iv) Guided by the principles embodied in the ITU Constitution, **we urge for multistakeholder actions driven by collaboration** among public and private sectors, academia, civil society and the technical community, both regionally and globally, to multiply the impact of development partnerships and assistance and to achieve our shared objectives.
- v) **We reaffirm the importance of leaving no one behind in digital transformation,** which will require urgent efforts to expand equal opportunities for all, including youth, women, persons with disabilities, older people, Indigenous Peoples and rural populations, through holistic, innovative and adaptive policies and targeted initiatives.

Laying the foundation for concerted collective action during the period 2026-2029, we affirm the following:

- 1) **We support the advancement of universal and meaningful connectivity, which includes accessible, affordable, multilingual, high-quality, resilient, ubiquitous, interoperable, safe and secure telecommunication/ICT infrastructures, devices, services and applications.** Building extensive telecommunication/ICT infrastructures, such as for high-speed backbones and last-mile connectivity solutions using a mix of technologies and operators, is crucial to bridge development gaps, leveraging optical fibre networks, international mobile telecommunication (IMT) systems, including local access technologies for rural and underserved areas, satellite and terrestrial communications and submarine, where appropriate. Robust infrastructure promotes economies of scale, new opportunities and long-term development. Moreover, we underscore the need for innovative investment models to support the sustainable deployment of telecommunications/ICTs and digital infrastructure. In the light of persistent financial challenges in underserved areas, we encourage the development of policy and regulatory approaches that promote innovation and enable public-public and public-private partnerships, government-wide collaboration, and long-term digital growth for all.

**We underscore the importance of investment in and funding for environmentally and economically sustainable telecommunications/ICTs, taking into account energy requirements for advancing digital transformation and development. Moreover, we believe that a well-integrated, multichannel approach to emergency communications** – including early warning systems – is essential to ensuring that universal connectivity enables effective and timely outreach to all people at risk of natural hazards and crises.

**We acknowledge the critical role of space radiocommunications in advancing connectivity.** We highlight our shared responsibility to ensure the rational, efficient, economic and equitable use of orbital and spectrum resources through continued international cooperation, inclusive dialogue, and capacity building in collaboration with other United Nations agencies to promote the long-term sustainability of space services.

- 2) **We call upon all policy-makers and stakeholders, according to their roles and responsibilities, to adopt human-centric and risk-informed approaches to digital transformation and new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs**, and implement policies to promote affordability of telecommunication/ICT services and devices to support closing digital divides, while empowering consumers in decision-making processes. Digital transformation requires a level-playing field, increased investment flows, as well as responsible and sustainable development of emerging, terrestrial, space radiocommunication and submarine, where appropriate. An adequate policy response to rapid technological transformation requires strengthened institutional capabilities, whole-of-government approach, agile and collaborative governance, the mainstreaming of evidence-based decision-making and adoption of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs.

To strengthen both national policy and regulatory frameworks and implementation capabilities, we recognize the need to foster human and institutional capacity-building initiatives across all ITU-D Priorities. Key areas of focus remain upskilling governments, regulators and key national and regional stakeholders.

- 3) **We recognize the need to fast-track investment in science, technology, innovation and digital transformation, acknowledging that digital innovation ecosystems are essential to re-energizing economies, supporting structural transformation and addressing critical sustainability challenges.** A strategic approach to creating enabling policy and business environments is necessary to scale digital innovation, entrepreneurship and the digitalization of economies. Strengthening digital and innovation capacities across sectors and government, especially supporting national governments to leverage science and technology for sustainable development, can improve productivity, economic diversification and competition, promoting equitable participation of all countries in the global digital economy.

**We pledge to support digital skills and digital literacy development initiatives for all**, including youth, women, persons with disabilities, older people, Indigenous Peoples and rural populations, **to ensure that all people can engage effectively and safely in the digital ecosystem**, reducing inequalities. Such initiatives may include development centres and training, specialized capacity-building programmes and voluntary and mutually agreed knowledge exchange initiatives that assist everyone to engage with digital technologies and support value creation. National and regional innovation centres can be further leveraged as institutional capacity-building mechanisms for research, training, co-creation on specific problems and the incubation of agile solutions by governments and ecosystem stakeholders, while fostering international collaboration.

- 4) **We will create synergies, strengthen collaboration and uphold existing commitments while building inclusive global and regional partnerships among public and private sectors, international funding agencies and other stakeholders** to pool resources, knowledge and good practices across stakeholder groups and regions to assist developing countries, in particular LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, with regard to promoting access to new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs. **We will further leverage regional, international, South-South and triangular cooperation** as means of accelerating the speed and scale of action across the United Nations development system and partners along with nationally designed and led initiatives towards the achievement of the SDGs.

**Together with regional telecommunication organizations, regulatory associations and other partners, we will endeavour to promote policy and regulatory environments** in key areas, driving digital transformation to enable collaboration to enhance regional connectivity, economies of scale and sustainable digital transformation.

- 5) **We acknowledge the potential of accelerating digital transformation and advancing progress towards sustainable development through, inter alia, artificial intelligence (AI) in relation to telecommunications/ICTs. We will strive to address the special challenges facing developing countries,** in particular LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and countries with special needs, through capacity building, tailored technical assistance, exchange of best practices, resource mobilization, impactful projects, match-making initiatives and relevant know-how, in order to leverage new and emerging ICTs, including AI in relation to telecommunications/ICTs.

We welcome the steadfast efforts of ITU D and its contribution towards building an inclusive and sustainable digital future for all.

**We further commit to amplify the impact of the work of ITU-D to accelerate global digital development and call upon Member States, development partners and the private sector to scale up relevant programmes and initiatives while prioritizing the needs of developing countries, in particular LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, for the full and rapid implementation of the Baku Declaration, [Baku Action Plan], WTDC resolutions and the regional initiatives.**