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>> CLAIRE SOMERVILLE: Thank you. Welcome to this session this morning on digital divides. My name is Claire Somerville. I'm the Executive Director of the Gender Centre at the Geneva Graduate Institute, just up the road from here.

My research is on -- and teaching, actually is on the intersectionalities of the digital divide and gender dynamics. I'm looking forward to this panel and hearing from our discussants. I'm delighted to facilitate this discussion with really quite esteemed a panel of speakers with whom we should continue the discussions of yesterday on the challenges to close the digital divides. Addressing the inequalities created by the digital divide and using technology to address SDG 5, the gender equality goal, is necessary to the realization of the 2030 Agenda.

Before we start, I'm going to invite Sulyna Abdula, would be with Action Line facilitator to offer us a few framing comments and remarks as we begin.

>> NUR SULYNA ABDULLAH: Thank you very much, Claire. Good morning Your Excellencies and ladies and gentlemen. Today, anyone, and everyone who can be connected is connected, often through multiple devices, and I will admit to five.

<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2023/Agenda/Session/150>

Today connectivity means opportunity. We all know that. Today, at least 95% of the world's population is now within range of a mobile broadband network. In LDCs, it's 83%. Yet, ITU estimates that there are still 2.7 billion people in the world who do not use the Internet.

And the problem does not stop there. Our data indicates that hundreds of millions more around the world who are online struggle with costly, poor quality, hard to access connections that do little or nothing to help them improve their lives.

The digital divides are multiple and multifaceted. Our data reveals at least five. The income divide, the level of Internet use in low-income countries at 26% remains far below that of high-income countries, which are close to universal usage at 92%. The urban/rural divide, the share of Internet users is almost twice as high. 82% urban, 46% rural.

The gender divide, 69% of men are using the Internet, 63% of women. The generation divide, 75% of youth use the Internet last year, versus 65% of the rest of the population. And the education divide. In nearly all countries where data is available, rates of Internet use are higher for those with more education, far higher in many cases.

According to our two figures, a full one-third of the world's population remains totally offline and many among the online are not meaningfully connected because of connectivity that's too slow or reliable or too expensive, or because they lack digital skills. Most of these people are in low or middle income countries and most of them live within good Internet coverage but the cost of a SmartPhone can exceed 70% of the income in these countries, which is a huge barrier.

We all know that it boils down to affordability, awareness, and skills or the lack thereof. We need innovation to overcome the crisis of adoption, to bring down the cost of connections and devices, to empower communities with digital skills. We need innovation for devices and solutions adapted to constraints, such as lack of reliable power sources, literacy, language issues, cultural norms that may limit the access of women and girls. We need, surprise, surprise, innovation, not just in technology and applications and services, but also in policy, regulation, are standardization, how we apply standards, how we employ technology, and we need to invest

in data, to understand why people are not getting connected, and where they are.

Bridging digital divides is at the heart of what we do at ITU with close to 1,200 multistakeholder members ITU provides a platform for everyone to come together to find solutions to advance connectivity, bridge the digital divides and make progress on the SDGs. The partner to connect digital coalition is just one of our areas of work. 600 pledges with close to \$30 billion in just over a year, and that figure is rising.

And while we partner to bridge the digital divides, everyone must drive not just universal but meaningful connectivity. There is no point in connecting your populations if their adoption does not translate to value creation. Above all, we need to commitment and political will. Thank you.

>> CLAIRE SOMERVILLE: Thank you very much, indeed, Sulyana. That was a very clear outline, and some solutions. I will turn to our panelists. We have four minutes each and I will present two questions simultaneously. There is a small clock in front of us, in case you lose track of time.

We have time left at the end, we will go to a Q&A with the audience.

Okay. Can I begin turning to my left, Mr. Ivan John Uy, secretary, the department of Information and Communications Technology, Philippines. What initiatives has the Philippines government implemented to bridge the digital divide and promote inclusivity in a digital economy? And how have these initiatives contributed to economic growth and development?

Secondly, what measures has the Philippine government taken to achieve gender parity in digital transformation, and ensure the inclusion of all members of society in the pursuit of a digital society?

Thank you.

>> IVAN JOHN UY: Thank you very much, Claire, for those questions.

On the first question, the Philippine development plan for 2023 through 2028, prioritizes the development of the digital economy and improvement of connectivity, promoting digital access is critical to address the digital divide and for Filipinos to thrive in in the digital world.

We are committed, connecting the unconnected communities in order to drive economic growth, foster

innovation, promote social inclusion, and enable Filipinos to conveniently access education, healthcare, and government services.

Among our key interventions is the national free public WiFi program, which covers all public places and state institutions like schools, training centers, public parks and hospitals among others. We have more than 3,000 tech for education centers, which are now scaling to become digital transformation centers with the guidance of ITU.

All of these seek to expand Internet access and build and equip individuals with the necessary digital skills and competence to thrive in the digital age. We are optimistic in our targets, to reduce the digital divide with the help of the Philippines very young and tech savvy population. Our current median age is 24 years old, compared to the global median age of 31. And Filipinos spend more than 10 hours per day on the Internet, compared to the global average of about six hours, and four hours are spent on social media platforms versus the two hours is the global standard.

The Philippines undertakes the whole of nation approach to ensure that we nurture a safe cyberspace, stimulate an innovation-driven economy, where home grown start-ups can grow, and succeed, ensure digital inclusion and promote the growth of citizens and governance.

On the second question on digital inclusion. It's not just about providing access to technology, but also ensuring gender parity. The department, again, recognizes this need and is implemented initiatives such as the digital innovation for women advancement program, or DWAP for short. It's a Filipino word that connotes mindset to increase the participation of Filipino women in the ICT sector.

The project names to review and revise policies to ensure fair recruitment, training, and advancement of men and women in the ICT sector, foster gender balance into the information society policies and strengthen educational policies to promote women and girls interests and opportunities in ICT careers, including in the rural and remote areas. To better understand women's access, we conducted the women and ICT development index survey for 2022, which provides a foundation for gender responsive policies.

Almost 94,000 women participated in 1,100 capability development activities under the DWAP program, covering web

and software development, blockchain and cybersecurity. Again, our department aims to bridge the gender gap and achieve digital inclusivity by leveling the playing field for both men and women in the ICT industry. Thank you very much.

>> CLAIRE SOMERVILLE: Thank you very much, indeed. And really, outlining some policy, strong policy responses to many of the divides that you Sulyna have just identified. I would like to turn to Egle Markeviciute. Sorry.

Vice minister, in the ministry of the economy and innovation in the Republic of Lithuania. Thank you.

What action is Lithuania taking to reduce social digital divides in public digital services? And how can we reduce the geographical divide to reduce the public services.

>> EGLE MARKEVICIUTE: Thank you so much. Perhaps before going into solution, one has to look at the makeup of the country. So a short intro on how Lithuania looks like in terms of worldwide -- worldwide picture.

We rank pretty high in terms of our digital public services. We have a lot of them. They are pretty strong. One thing that we lack, like many other countries worldwide, is an attractive user-friendly interface that would be easy to use for different age groups, different -- people of different digital maturity and digital skills levels if you will.

Besides that as Ms. Abdulluah has introduced to the five digital divides, I would say we have three. One digital divide is between rural and urban populations. There's around an 8% difference between rural and urban populations in terms of access to the Internet.

And the second biggest digital divide is between young people and elderly people. To illustrate that, statistically speaking, we have 40% difference between the very youngest and the very elderly in terms of Internet access. And a whopping 60% difference in terms of young people versus elderly people using public digital services.

And looking into the reasons rightly as it was mentioned before, about the digital divides, one is probably economic and accessibility. Second is cultural indifference or unwillingness to use certain services. We have to admit there are people, especially among senior citizens who are not attracted to the digital sphere, and the older they get, the more difficult it is to introduce

them and to involve them in this area.

And, of course, there is -- this is corrected towards ourselves, towards the representatives of the government. The -- you know, the inclusive digital services themselves being the UX, are they really accessible. There are made in a way that would be attractive for a lot of people?

So in terms of Lithuania experience, one thing that we did between 2018 and 2020, was training around 100,000 people with over 2,000 volunteers in the whole Lithuania. Mainly it was oriented towards senior citizens training them in digital skills. Interestingly enough, in Lithuania, 80% of that training, 80% of participants were women. So when it comes to people of an elegant age in Lithuania, at least, women are more likely to introduce themselves to enormative or novel solutions and novel things.

When it comes to digital public services, we have invested and we are currently programming big reform, making sure that the public services that we have are unified and could be used through a single digital platform that would be accessible and easy to use for different people.

And since I see that I have 13 seconds left, when it comes to geographical divides, Lithuanian makeup, we are a very flat country. Our biggest hill is 293 meters above sea level. So we have to be honest, we didn't have a lot of challenges in there.

The second thing, our square meters -- we have 65,000 square meters and 2.8 million people. So the density is quite low. This becomes a problem in urban -- in rural populations, and the solution that the government was following for the past 15 years was a collaboration between private sector, making sure that the government invests in backbone infrastructure in rural areas and the business provides the last mile solution.

>> CLAIRE SOMERVILLE: Thank you very much, indeed. And thank you for outlining the very different context population context of Lithuania. I think in contrast, particularly to the Philippines and the aging populations, rather a youthful population. Very important.

Thank you.

Now, I will turn to my left to my Apollo Knights, who is the director of the national telecommunications regulatory commission in ain't Vincent and the Grenadines. Welcome.

How important is an multisector legal framework to narrowing the digital divide, and what policy interventions has saint Vincent and the Grenadines implied to facilitate a more inclusive and resilient digital ecosystem?

Thank you.

>> APOLLO KNIGHTS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Excellencies, distinguishes participants, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

It's a humbling experience to be among such experts sharing a common goal for more inclusive and Connected Society.

In a nutshell, our country has an affordability challenge that contributes significantly towards our digital divide. Our current mobile subscriber rate is at 94%, of which 82% have SmartPhones. This figure, 90% are mobile prepared subscribers or fixed broadband penetration is at 60%. However, only 66% of our prepaid mobile subscribers maintains a regular data plan.

But consistent connectivity, it reduces the ability for our citizens to properly partake in a digital ecosystem. The broadband commission recommends that the monthly costs of entry level broadband should be within 2% of GNI. This is a view I fully support. We need to look at other options that seek to increase GDP and employment levels, thereby increasing the number of citizens that are within the 2% of GNI threshold.

This view is also supported by the recent support published in 2022, by expert panels as prepared. We cannot separate that from regional digital divides. We need to consider targeted policy interventions that benefits low-income households therefore allowing them to afford services that were previously unaffordable to them.

Madam Chair, this is where an effective multisector legal framework comes into play. One that touches on three digital, FinTech, data protection, cybersecurity, et cetera, thereby allowing for easy bidirectional trade of goods and services and most importantly building trust among all stakeholders.

When such a framework is enacted and operationalized, we'll facilitate the driving the digital transformation both within in and across all borders.

So we need to accelerate this process of having our small developing economies be more interoperable with those of other countries. And this WSIS Forum, we have all the players that can help us to develop this gold as saint

Vincent and Grenadines seeks to build a more inclusive economy. We doing so on digital skills development.

In the interest of the time, I will touch on two areas we have been working on recently. In 2020, in collaboration with four other member countries, we have revised and ratified a new treaty, that sets a framework for ICTs in our subregion. And the last six months, we have worked with the World Bank and three other member countries to conduct a digital skills assessment survey, with the aim of identifying the digital skills our economies need in the next seven years.

This was done with specific attention to gender balance and inclusion.

And in closing, I want to mention that we are part of the ITU, and we made two pledges in 2022. So we are working close with our neighbors and we also working with our global panels all with the objective of creating and inclusive, resilient and Connected Society for the benefit of all. Thank you. And may God bless you.

>> CLAIRE SOMERVILLE: Thank you very much, indeed. Thank you.

And for reminding us, really, of the critical nature of regional and global collaborations and coordination and particularly in terms of international legal frameworks and treaties. Thank you very much.

Continuing to my left, I would like to invite from Mr. Malawi, Mr. Andrew Nyirenda, with the Malawi communication regulatory authority. Two questions. Digital inclusion is a driver for growth and the social economic development of many countries worldwide. How is Malawi using innovation and technology to empower its young people and children, and the communities at large?

And secondly, rapid technological development means that almost all developing countries are playing a catchup game. What is Malawi doing to overcome existing challenges and close the digital divide to reach out to the most vulnerable groups? Thank you.

>> ANDREW NYIRENDA: I thank you very much, moderator and thank you, Excellencies and all distinguished ladies and gentlemen. Let me start with a disclaimer, I'm Andrew Nyirenda, in for my director.

From a Director General, I would like to thank ITU for hosting this event, the WSIS, a great event. And we have been here for the past two days listening, and I can put it that Malawi is a compendium of other challenges and

opportunities that have been addressed and discussed here.

And our government is trying to put a number of interventions, trying to close this digital divide in the country. Let me try to put into perspective, what Malawi is all about. Where least developing country, I can put it, LDC. Yesterday we heard Rwanda talking about the gender -- no, the disability, whether it's a disability, and we tried to link that Malawi is not landlocked, but it's a land linked country.

We are a country with a GDP of less than \$650. We have been growing about 3% for the past three years. And we have a population of about 19.8 million, and coming to the question, Ms. Moderator, is that 65% of this 19.8 million people are the youth and the children, and 52% are the female women, which means that this issue of digital divide needs to be addressed critically.

In terms of geography, we are at 85% rural and 15% urban. You see the gap there. And in order to address this question, in order for us to include the young people and the children, we see that government is mainly driven from the policies that government is implementing from the African Union, 2063 that Malawi has adopted, our national digital economy, as well as the national digital policy, that we have just finalized.

One the key interventions that the government is implementing is on the -- the innovation of research that will bridge the gap for the youth. I have noted that innovation, research, and development, is a critical element. Only 3% of per annum is going towards the expenditure and want to include innovation and technology targeting the young and we are targeting about \$90 which is minimal. We want to go to over \$1 billion, such as contact development so that we have meaningful information that can be shared. We are looking at the digital literacy and the digital skills in the primary and the secondary schools and also the establishment of digital economies.

On the challenges, and how we're addressing them, we have the universal service fund. This is a fund that the regulator collects money from and implement that we close the gaps, which are underserved and less served. With regards to the key project is on the connected school. We know that these young children or young artists should be exposed to digital trends at an early age.

Furthermore, the government is implementing the broadband operators. We listen on Monday from what our

colleagues in South America are doing. It's an intervention that we are looking at and also in closing the device gap, Malawi has a subscription of about 12 million but only 2 million people have access to SmartPhones and we need to close on that.

Thank you very much Ms. Moderator, but before I hand over the mic, I just want to thank ITU for the rapid assistance it has brought to Malawi with the cyclone that we are currently facing as a country, through the regional office in Zimbabwe. Thank you very much.

>> CLAIRE SOMERVILLE: Thank you very much, indeed and, of course, our thoughts are overnight with the cyclone that's happened.

Thank you again for pointing out some really excellent contextual differences and I think in particular, income and age profiles of Malawi, in contrast to the other contexts. So we have heard from four different country contexts, which situates our discussion.

I'm now going to turn to Dr. Irina Soeffky, European and international digital policy. Despite the digital strategy, which we just heard being focused rather on domestic concerns, how can the ITU as a multinational organization work on the reduction of the different manifestations of the digital divide?

And bridging the digital divide, the title of our track here, also requires industry participation, what can we do as governments to ensure sufficient engagement?

Thank you.

>> IRINA SOEFFKY: Thank you very much, Claire. It's a pleasure and honor to be with you this morning and as for the German government, I can say that we are very much aware of the different digital divides that still do exist, nationally, but also internationally, and this forum and in particular, your precise numbers have been a very good reminder that all of these divides are actually real and we'll have to deal with it.

And as you already skated, my long job title already shows that I am of the opinion that actually the national and the international processes really have to go hand in hand, because there's work, obviously to be done internationally, but also on the national, the international sphere.

And actually, what the German government did already is to draft a brand new digital strategy, addressing all of our priorities and bridging the digital divides is a major

priority in there. With err venturing more out on the international sphere and working on an international digital policy strategy, which will spell out what we can do and work on that.

What we certainly don't want to do is invent something that is completely new, but work on those that are already there and work on the important issues and push them through and make them work even better.

And it comes probably not as a surprise that ITU in our view is a very important player in this field and we certainly look forward to work with ITU and all of our fellow governments and other players in this arena to, yeah, work on bridging digital divides.

It is probably no surprise for me to say that for us, a multistakeholder approach is very important, and it is very much to our pleasure that this forum, or this panel already shows that bringing together players from different fields this morning and discussing this very important issue, and looking at the ITU more in detail, obviously industry participation is already there. We find that very important, as well as the participation of other players.

And we would certainly welcome more participation, more involvement, maybe even new members and would certainly welcome of the advisory group which works already are has worked already intensively on these questions, especially in the development track could continue its work.

So wherever we can be helpful as governments to push that further and invite and maybe also encourage more engagement of other sectors, we would certainly be happy to do this and work also with fellow governments to bring this record.

Yeah. That's all for the moment. I'm looking forward to many more discussions on these important issues today and these coming days. And thank you very much for this inspiring panel.

>> CLAIRE SOMERVILLE: Thank you very much, indeed. Thank you to that multisectoral and multistakeholder approaches that the ITU and other organizations have tried to foster. And I think all of our high-level panels yesterday and today have tried to bridge on that and work with the multisector and multistakeholder composition.

Thank you.

And in that line, I'm now going to turn to professor Josef Noll, who is Secretary-General of Basic Internet

Foundation. Professor Noll, what can we do to dismantle the digital divide for girls and women and what are the partners that you would like to invite to bridge the digital divide?

>> JOSEF NOLL: Thank you, Claire. I really like the inputs, because we work in 14 countries in Africa.

And so the numbers I got from Malawi is, like, reality in so many countries. And Irina, when you talked about the German strategy, we launched in Norway two years back. The international or the digital cooperation and -- sorry and development policies. And I really think that we need to put digital in the center of all the developments.

Having said that, we as a university, I'm a professor at the University of Oslo and clearly collaborating a lot with the African research university alliances. We are coming here to actually bring the multistakeholder as universities to the pictures. And what we have seen is that the numbers presented by ITU are salient numbers. The 2.7 billion people not connected, we count everyone as Facebook and WhatsApp users as being a connected person, but if we look into the actual utility of who makes value out of the Internet, we are down to about 50%.

And if we then look to Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, whatever, we even drop a lot, lot lower. And that is actually the question where we -- where we've asked ourselves, do we need to rethink? Rethink the access to information? Because like, from UNESCO yesterday said information should be a generic -- sorry, a good and it should be a human right. I challenged him yesterday evening on shouldn't it be the access to information being a generic human right?

And we are actually thinking a bit about why don't we apply the model of the road? Yes, I need someone building the road, but once the roads are built, pedestrians and cyclists can use the road for free. Why don't we dare to challenge the Internet and say, do we need a layer of digital pedestrians and digital cyclists who can use the road for free without first signing a mobile broadband agreement?

There are, of course, a lot of questions, but we really need to rethink.

And the second point, and I was very happy seeing the focus in Malawi on the school connectivity, because we are discussing here and this is an excellent forum on how we can use the common goal of connecting all schools further

to connect in the community a community learning and living lab, thus first connect the schools and then connect the communities, create what we call CL3, the community, learning and living labs.

And, of course from the universities, our contribution here is really the knowledge contribution, and we have established regional competence centers a lot of universities in Africa, helping us to configure the devices, to make sure that students not only have theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge on how to go out and connect the fields and us this others.

When we talk about the partners, it's really about the universities -- I start with ourselves. Sorry for that, but like building the competence centers and connectivity of the schools and the CL3s.

On the telecom operators, I'm an old telecom guy. I was leading the 3G development, and I'm really asking why don't telecom operators become partners of the governments? Because, like we have seen that in the crisis, in the COVID, it was the national governments who come out.

But if I then see that, like a telecom operator after COVID goes to government and said, you can -- you know, very easy, you can buy our dashboard for seeing where the hotspots are, and it only costs you like 500,000 Euros per year for the city of Oslo, that's just nuts! Sorry.

And to conclude, the government organizations are really would stress us not to see telcos not as just cash cows but as partners to connect the schools. And the NGOs, we need them for bringing content out for local empowerment, for having the cultural heritage.

And last but not least, ITU and UNICEF, I would really love for you to continue about the pledges, but also set the framework conditions for the empowerment of the LDCs. Thank you.

>> CLAIRE SOMERVILLE: Thank you so much. As a fellow academic, I'm happy to hear you talk about the wider development schemes.

I'm going to turn to my left, my far left now. Introduce you to Aleve Mine, would be from the OneGoal Initiative for governance, based in Zurich. Which key issues have not been addressed yet by the international community? And why were these issues not addressed?

Thank you.

>> ALEVE MINE: Thank you. I'm based in Geneva. We used to be in Zurich, but we are both based in Geneva now.

We need a treaty on the use of quantum, including the significance for other tech. Any of you who would want to move towards this treaty would have full support of the -- of a program of the one goal initiative called Quacus starting with a Q.

The nature of these technologies make them retroactive in some respects and pertinent to every country, not just a couple of countries. I would suggest that the treaty would include any needed articles to which the compliance won't necessarily be verifiable at the time of significant.

On the question of quantum no party and no stakeholder can safely say I've got this.

Secondly, when it comes to cybersecurity, cyber actors should focus more on enabling the accurate identification of the actors behind each cyber incident. On the relations of those actors with other entities and how these are impacted, this is a collective activity. Without the ability to attribute an incident and follow the trail for all we know, the hacking entity may be indirectly relate to another entity touching the industry. If any loop can be found in that industry, that makes it inclined to create its own market. It is not excluded either that a tacit behavior loop would exist even in the absence of direct relationship.

Moreover, not only can the incidents themselves create a massive damage, but also so can cyber insurance, even in the absence of cyber incidents through its financing. In both of those themes, coming to, you know, your second question. Boundaries we create embody a risk transfer, whereby what is being tragically ignored is recursion. The significance of recursion is that we are maneuvering ourselves towards a state of risk that cannot be tamed by any level of creativity or innovation. Yes, we need innovation. We will need ever more than innovation until we can't deliver any more.

Derisking without worsening ones own resilient is only feasible when risk is deleted, without creating or worsening other risks anywhere in the system. That is constituted by the humans and the environment they are interacting with taken together, be it on our authority or elsewhere.

Parse risk transfers do not derisk in that manner. Instead they travel by all pathways available in the system, with a series of transformations and end up impacting back where they had started in other robes. Risk

transfer is a swap between -- is the swap of a loss for another in a context of an accrual of risks. This matters in ICTs because through tech, we are trying to derisk ourselves.

In conclusion, this needs to be done through a new method for making decisions with a lot more forethought. To finish, I would like to emphasize the readiness of Quacus towards all efforts to a quantum treaty. Thank you very much.

>> CLAIRE SOMERVILLE: Ink that you very much, indeed and thank -- thank you very much, indeed and thank you for highlighting the role of governance, thank you.

I will now turn online, I hope to invite Ms. Thoko Miya, CEO and founder of African Tech Unicorns. I communicated with her earlier this morning and she was having a few technical difficulties but I'm hoping she's good.

Perfect.

>> THOKO MIYA: Yes, I am here and I'm online. Thank you very much for the reception. Thank you, all, participants, distinguished guests and chairperson.

I will bring back the comment -- the statement made at the opening of the ITU WTDC held in Kigali, June 2022, where it was stated that the potential of the Internet for social and economic good remains largely untapped despite 30 years of steady growth.

This was the conclusion of the report and I just want to bring in to highlight the circumstances specifically within African societies, all be using South Africa as an example, where equal power relations remain in the communities and the households.

There is unequal access and unequal participation and unequal treatment of men and women within the global digital village. And this spoke out into industry. Although 30% of African women are entrepreneurs, their contribution to African economies is vital despite them not being treated equally in the sharing of responsibilities.

This is also on the back bone of high levels of poverty, I literacy, lack of education, and lack of e-Skills and lack of digital skills and a lack of distribution of care responsibilities within households.

So taking this and putting it into a framework of irregular or nonexistent electricity supply, as we spoke earlier, chairperson, there are a myriad of barriers that are excluding access to ICTs.

To South Africa, we have gone to 7% loss of GDP due to electricity cutouts, a phenomenon that's being called load shedding. And according to PWC, where the GDP was supposed to grow by 20% in 2022, we took a correct cut, as a result of the electricity crisis in a 5% decline in GDP. And that's the most recent report released.

It's not just shops and factories closing down a few times a day, but it's more severe than that. It looks at what ising to be a further entrenchment of the digital divide, a further entrenchment of a youth digital divide, of a racial digital divide and it will lead to a huge contribution in consumers not being able to access not only their spend, but their regular rights, and it's a huge barrier to business in terms of investment.

So looking at digital innovation and looking at the digital divide, our innovations through technology to connectivity are specifically barriers to specific problems to our localized area. So in terms of achieving sustainable growth, the growth of SDG, the growth of the Internet, you know, there are a number of differences in how ICTs are actually going to be able to grow in Africa and, you know, the solutions are there and there are recommendations in terms of these and how we can work together to avoid devised investments, decreased, wide spread perceptions of ICT as a commodity which is managed and sold and only accessible by a select few while greater majorities of populations, 65% of whom are youth, are still unable to afford basic Internet connectivity an rural areas as well as township areas are still completely left out of the loop of the public investment frameworks and unable to access public infrastructure, ICT, broadband connectivity technology and knowledge.

So in light of this, I have some recommendations on what dollars can do, which is specifically to support of use of ICTing in education and informal literacy programs to build ICT skills among young and adult learners who is the next population. Promote ICTs --

>> CLAIRE SOMERVILLE: I'm afraid we are running out of time. We may cycle back to you towards the end as we open up the floor. Thank you very much, indeed.

I think particularly important to hear about your experiences, from a young tech entrepreneur and the everyday realities of working in this area, not least with the electricity and the energy issues you mentioned. Thank you.

We have a few minutes left to open up to the floor. So are there any questions in the audience or perhaps online? Perhaps you would indicate you have a question.

No? You are a very, very comprehensive panel, I think.

(Laughter).

Perhaps then I would like to -- oh, I can see one there, right at the back. Yes, please.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you, Roxanne Mcelwane weber from the United States.

I would like to get more clarification on the 2.7 billion that are still offline. One the panelists indicated this included people connected to Facebook and WhatsApp. I just wanted to see if we could tease that out and clarify that number a bit, if possible, because I was under the impression that these were sort of proper connections. So if the number is actually larger, I think that would be an important data point to clarify. Thank you.

>> CLAIRE SOMERVILLE: Right. Thank you very much. Yes, to get a bit more granular with that big number. Sulyna, you mentioned you could respond.

>> NUR SULYNA ABDULLAH: Thank you for that question, Roxanne. The 2.7 billion figure is a figure of populations who are not online, who have never, ever used the Internet. So that's the figure. It's 2.7 billion in 2022, who have not used the Internet before, versus 5.3 billion who are online.

And I think the confusion is amongst the 5.3 billion who are online, hundreds of millions or maybe even billions are not able to use the Internet as they wish, and which is why ITU is stressing on meaningful connectivity. It's not just about connecting people now. You have to make sure that they can use the Internet, for whatever they need to do, whenever they want to do it, and that's the concept of that.

I hope that explains it. While I have the floor, may I respond to a couple of comments. I think the panelists spoke about a multistakeholder approach and that really is the key to connectivity. Now, everyone is getting into a frenzy because there's only seven years left to achieve the SDG goals. ITU believes that connectivity is the key. If we don't connect the 2.7 billion, the less likely we are to connect the SDGs.

And Professor Noll, you were referring to the 50% of

those online being able to make something out of it, and that was what I was referring to, about meaningful connectivity.

Thirdly, we talked about community access. Now, this is not a new content. Think about into the early 2000s where we talked about universal access and it was all about collective access before individual access. So these formulas, they work. These are basic formulas and perhaps we should go back to basics because this is what we truly need, innovative ways to bridge the digital divides. The final panelists alluded to resilient. If we don't tackle resilience, connection doesn't work. You need to work only digital resilience. That will be our next Clarion call.

>> CLAIRE SOMERVILLE: Thank you for restating the importance of ITU in coordinating these as a multistakeholder organization.

I'm afraid, I don't think we will be able to have time for the final question, I'm terribly sorry, I'm sure the panelists would be happy to speak to you afterwards.

Well, thank you to all of you. I think this was an excellent panel. I'm delighted to see that we had a good gender balance on this panel. Thank you, organizers.

It was good to hear about the different commitments and the different examples particularly from the countries and the organizations. So I feel confident we can look towards some form of transformative and sustainable change in addressing these digital divides.

Thank you for all of your contributions. Later this afternoon, I will be providing a three-minute summary of the discussion during the closing of the High-Level Policy Sessions 5 p.m. I thank all of our panelists and all of you for joining us. Thank you very much.

(End of session 11:00 CET)

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