Is it possible to eliminate the digital divide in a ubiquitous network society?

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WSIS Declaration of Principles

- Universal, ubiquitous, equitable and affordable access to ICT infrastructure and services, constitutes one of the challenges of the Information Society and should be an objective of all stakeholders involved in building it. (Para 21)

- We are fully committed to turning this digital divide into a digital opportunity for all, particularly for those who risk being left behind and being further marginalized. (Para 10)
Universal or Ubiquitous?

- **Universal connectivity**
  - Available
  - Accessible
  - Affordable

- **Ubiquitous connectivity**
  - Anywhere
  - Anytime
  - by Anything
  - by Anyone

% of population with telephone access, 2002

- Developing (excl. China and India): 65%
- China and India: 94%
- Developed: 97%
- World: 81%

The newer the technology, the less even the global distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>High income economies</th>
<th>Middle and lower income economies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broadband</td>
<td>150m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet users</td>
<td>730m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phones</td>
<td>1.8bn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed lines</td>
<td>1.2bn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV sets</td>
<td>1.2bn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>6.3bn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ITU World Telecommunication Indicators Database.
Today’s ubiquitous applications may be suitable mainly to developed economies ...

- Road pricing schemes
- Contactless ski-passes, using RFID chips
- Using technology to make ageing more comfortable
- RFID chips in passports
... But tomorrow’s ubiquitous applications will be suitable to developing economies

- Traffic congestion management
- Inventory management for offshore manufacturing
- Livestock tracking at Chitale Dairy Farm, India
- Environmental monitoring and disaster relief
Is it possible to eliminate the digital divide in a ubiquitous network society?

No! but it is possible to reduce its extent and its impact
websites: [www.itu.int/ubiquitous](http://www.itu.int/ubiquitous)  
[www.itu.int/wsis](http://www.itu.int/wsis)

contact: [tim.kelly@itu.int](mailto:tim.kelly@itu.int)

Thank you