

Accelerating digital transformation in challenging times

Advocacy toolkit



**World Telecommunication
& Information Society Day**
17 May 2021



Accelerating digital transformation in challenging times

“The information society has emerged as one of the main lines of defence against COVID-19. In 2021, ITU will use World Telecommunication and Information Society Day to unite the world in pursuit of digital transformation in every field of business and all aspects of life. We would like to hear your success stories, but also about your challenges, and about the lessons we could learn to prepare for challenging times in the future.”

Houlin Zhao, ITU Secretary-General



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Our focus: Digital transformation in challenging times

The COVID-19 crisis has not only highlighted the critical role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for the continued functioning of societies. It has also brought to the fore startling digital inequalities, both between and within countries.

ITU members and other stakeholders have stepped up with essential services, saving lives and sustaining economies. Governments and the private sector alike have demonstrated remarkable resilience.

At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the urgency of accelerating digital transformation. This means advancing the goals and targets of ITU's Connect 2030 Agenda and leaving no one behind.

World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) takes place on 17 May, ITU's birthday. This year's occasion, WTISD 2021, focuses on a timely theme: *Accelerating digital transformation in challenging times*.

Throughout 2021, all of us here at the ITU Secretariat are aiming to inspire, guide and mobilize the transformation. We need you – ITU members and partners, other stakeholders and independent media professionals – to do this with us.



For you: Campaign materials

To help you celebrate ahead of 17 May and beyond, we are putting together multimedia, audio and visual materials which are updated on ITU's [WTISD campaign site](#) as they materialize.

We will also be communicating via our web, social media and multimedia channels:

[Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Flickr](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Instagram](#)
[SoundCloud](#) | [Apple Podcasts](#) | [Spotify](#) | [Spreaker](#)
[MyITU beta](#) | [ITU News](#) | [ITU News Magazine](#)

Make use of our **#Connect2030** and **#DigitalTransformation** hashtags.

Our 2021 campaign poster is available in ITU's six official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

We encourage you to share our materials with your own networks, share your own materials with us, and join conversations on issues related to the campaign.



Get inspired: Stories that are moving the cursor

From Digital Transformation Centres in the Dominican Republic to delivering life-saving information amid COVID-19 in Niger to green digital responses to COVID-19 in Slovenia, digital technologies are driving development and spurring socio-economic transformation.

ITU reports regularly about digital transformation initiatives around the world.

Check out the latest stories [Search – My ITU](#)

Digital transformation is about improving each citizen's experience and changing the way we do business. It improves quality of life and enhances people's wellbeing, while ultimately aiming to meet United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Factors driving these changes range from increasingly diverse technologies to new business models, aiming to deliver excellence through services that are personalized, paperless, cashless and mobile, as well as based on every customer's informed consent.

Our common goals: The Connect 2030 Agenda

ITU is united in connecting the world. Our [Connect 2030 Agenda](#) contributes to the [UN Decade of Action](#) to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDG9 in particular: **Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.**

Digital technologies, and the work of ITU, are vital to achieve all 17 SDGs.

ITU's Connect 2030 Agenda includes key goals and targets related to digital transformation.

Goal 1



Growth

Goal 2



Inclusiveness

Goal 3



Sustainability

Goal 4



Innovation

Goal 5



Partnership

Target 1.4

All countries adopt a digital agenda/strategy

All countries should have a national digital agenda, policy, strategy, legislation or policy statement identifying and listing their national goals and objectives in relation to digital transformation, and how to go about achieving it.

National policies can help set out a clear vision for national infrastructure and connectivity. They can establish clear principles and priorities, and help define mechanisms for extending connectivity, while building protection and online safeguards for more vulnerable members of society.

Resources for target 1.4 [here](#).

Target 1.7

Population should be interacting with government services online

Governments aiming for digital transformation need to start by delivering citizen-centric public services for all.

While e-government initiatives vary from country to country, digital technologies consistently help to modernize government and public services and vastly improve the citizen experience.

In essence, countries engaging in digital transformation aim to improve how to operate, how to deliver public services, how to engage stakeholders better and how to provide impactful citizen-centric solutions to all.

For example, online voter registration, birth registration and passport applications are often carried out through online access, speeding up application processes and ensuring faster and more efficient services.

Resources for target 1.7 [here](#).

Target 3.1

Improve cybersecurity preparedness

In this digital age, trust is everything. Cybersecurity is crucial to ensuring universal, trustworthy, and equitable access to connectivity.

Yet cyberthreats and cyberattacks give rise to ever-growing security challenges for both the public and private sectors in all countries. These range from attacks on individual targets to attacks on specific platforms and actors, or generalized attacks that can transcend national borders.

Enhancing cybersecurity and protecting critical information infrastructures are essential to every nation's social and economic development. All countries should have a national cybersecurity preparedness action plan, legislation or policy statement in place, identifying and listing their national goals and objectives in relation to cybersecurity and cyberattacks, and how to go about protecting national infrastructure and systems in the event of cyberattack.

Resources for target 3.1 [here](#).

Target 3.5

All countries should have a National Emergency Telecommunication Plan as part of their national and local disaster risk reduction strategies

All countries should have a national action plan, framework, legislation or policy for emergency telecommunication preparedness, identifying and listing their national goals and objectives in relation to natural disasters and emergencies, and how to go about protecting populations, national infrastructure and systems in the event of natural disaster.

Population growth, rapid urbanization and climate change are making a growing number of communities and people around the world more vulnerable to extreme weather events and natural disasters that pose risks of death, destruction, displacement, injury and damage to people, communities and livelihoods, as well as critical telecommunication/ICT infrastructure.

Timely and effective information flow is important for early warning and alerting and for the effective coordination and articulation of response activities within all stakeholders working in disaster management, from first responders to senior officials.

Resources for target 3.5 [here](#).

Target 4.1

All countries should have policies/strategies fostering telecommunication/ICT-centric innovation

All countries should have policies and strategies for ICT-centric innovation.

Today, innovation is being transformed by ICTs, big data and AI. Innovation and learning can be either formal or informal (e.g. incremental learning), while 'innovation hubs' play a large role in promoting the cross-fertilization of ideas in the modern digital.

For example, the Radio Regulations established since the first Radiotelegraph Convention in 1906 not only ensure that radiocommunication services can coexist, but also provide the stability required to attract investments and enable the exponential growth of telecommunications and ICTs. They provide a solid foundation to support a variety of emerging radio systems, applications and technologies that revolutionize the digital economy.

These innovations positively impact the lives of billions of people around the world through the creation of a digital landscape for sustainable growth and development. They help ensure more people across the world are connected and able to benefit from the widening range of digital services offered via wireless communication. Cooperation and partnerships between all stakeholders are what allows us to come to common agreements that are then adopted by countries throughout the world.

Meanwhile, ITU standards help to share innovation worldwide. As the world becomes more connected, the need to bring innovators together is greater than ever. Collaboration is the key to develop international standards that capture the latest breakthroughs for the benefit of all.

Resources for target 4.1 [here](#).

Target 5.1

Increased effective partnerships with stakeholders and cooperation with other organization and entities in the telecommunication/ICT environment

In modern society, innovation can come from any angle. Including new, and diverse stakeholders, and different points of view is a way to ensure that social change is harnessed for the good, and that the most vulnerable members of society can be protected. The need for partnerships among different stakeholders was recognized in both the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Forming effective, cross-sectoral partnerships among different stakeholders is proving key to addressing the critical challenges facing humanity and the planet. ITU is committed to ensuring that partnerships and cooperation are more effective, as we address the challenges facing us head-on.

Resources for target 5.1 [here](#).

Why care?

Billions of people still lack the benefits of Internet access

People who are connected can work from home, obtain information and learning tools, and enhance their businesses. They can be more productive at work, connect with loved-ones remotely and make themselves better protected in emergencies.

When countries invest to bring people online, everyone wins.

About 4 billion people, or just over half the world's population, were online by 2019. But the other 3.7 billion people lacked Internet access and could not take advantage of the digital revolution. Hundreds of millions more have struggled with slow, costly, and unreliable access, even in normal times.

Global Internet access, in %, 2019				
	Urban households	Rural households	Female	Male
World	72	37.7	48.3	55.2
Africa	28	6.3	20.2	37.1
Arab States	74	38.4	47.3	61.3
Asia & Pacific	70.4	37	41.3	48.3
CIS	80.6	66.4	71.7	74.0
Europe	87.7	77.9	80.1	85.1
The Americas	74.4	49.9	77.0	76.3

Resources: *ITU statistics, ITU facts and figures 2020.*

What's next?

Everyone has a part to play

We must all work together to bring everyone, everywhere online.

Member States can:

- Continue leveraging telecommunications/ICTs by developing digital policies and strategies to adapt and respond timely and effectively to different challenges that may occur.
- Report national progress with special focus on the targets that particularly contribute to digital transformation in the framework of the Connect 2030 Agenda, by providing data and statistics, as appropriate, as well as initiatives to be included in the [Connect 2030 Agenda microsite](#).

Sector Members, Associates and Academia can:

- Continue to facilitate cooperation and partnership in areas such as innovation, infrastructure, investment and capacity development to advance digital transformation for all and achieve the Connect 2030 Agenda.
- Share their technology-driven strategies with the world, considering the possible opportunities and/or challenges of digital transformation, and how these challenging times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, can be used as an opportunity to connect all.

Media can:

- Tell stories about how digital transformation is benefiting citizens, consumers and society.
- Hold governments accountable, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of current policies, strategies and plans, identifying policy gaps and describing new challenges to address amid the rapid evolution of technologies.
- Tell exciting stories – through talk shows, interviews, radio debates and social media campaigns – about how governments, companies or people are making a difference.

All stakeholders can:

- Identify a tangible problem – within your family, your school, your university, your workplace, your network or your community – and take action.
- Raise awareness of our key WTISD 2021 theme, *Accelerating digital transformation in challenging times*.
- Reflect how ITU responds and adapts to new challenges through ICTs.
- Enhance cooperation with governments, business communities, United Nations bodies, civil society and other stakeholders to accelerate digital transformation.
- Reinforce the importance of developing digital strategies and other technology-driven initiatives.
- Share your story on social media to inspire others.
- Consider both the opportunities and the challenges of digital transformation while seeking timely and effective answers to broader global challenges.
- Share with ITU your expertise, guidelines, lessons learned, success stories, case studies, good practices, solutions, publications, and policies put in place to better meet future challenging times.

Why celebrate?

World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) has been celebrated annually every 17 May since 1969 to mark the founding of ITU and the signing of the first International Telegraph Convention in 1865.

WTISD 2021 will take place virtually in the framework of the World Summit on the Information Society Forum 2021 (WSIS).

The event will address the importance of enhancing collaboration and cooperation across countries and sectors and showcase how governments, companies and academia can accelerate digital transformation through telecommunication/ICT in and for future challenging times.

Related events within the WSIS Forum 2021 will address digital transformation in challenging times.

Register [here](#) for WSIS events.

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