

High-level Panel Follow-up Roundtable 1A - Global Connectivity

1st Session: 6 December 2019, 8:30 – 10.30AM EST

Meeting Note

Recommendation 1A: We recommend that by 2030, every adult should have affordable access to digital networks, as well as digitally-enabled financial and health services, as a means to make a substantial contribution to achieving the SDGs. Provision of these services should guard against abuse by building on emerging principles and best practices, one example of which is providing the ability to opt in and opt out, and by encouraging informed public discourse

Champions:

Government of Uganda, UNICEF, ITU

Key Constituents:

Broadband Commission, European Union (EU), Facebook, Gates Foundation, Global Compact, GSMA, International Trade Law Division of the UN Office of Legal Affairs, Internet Society (ISOC), Government of Malawi, Government of Malaysia, Mastercard, M-PESA (Safaricom), Office of the UN Deputy-Secretary-General, Government of Paraguay (LLDC chair), Government of Rwanda, UN China Team, UN Secretary-General's Task Force on Digital Financing of the Sustainable Development Goals (DFTF), UNDP, United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), Viasat, Web Foundation, World Bank, World Economic Forum (WEF)

Opening Remarks from the Recommendation Champions

Underscored the need to map and scale up current efforts, including work of those participating in the roundtable, and to identify the gaps and the key challenges preventing global connectivity.

Champions highlighted that Recommendation 1A has wide implications for the United Nations' work and stressed the importance of equitable connection, sustained and fair access to opportunities. It was noted that the gender gap in internet access is growing in many parts of the world and that reaching the second 4 billion people would be complex because many of those people are in rural areas.

Reference was made to the UNICEF-ITU "GIGA" project, which is supported by the multistakeholder Broadband Commission, and will focus on mapping schools, increasing school internet connectivity and providing access to digital public goods, all in an effort to accelerate achievement of the 2030 agenda.

Themes raised by Key Stakeholders

Connecting with ongoing initiatives: It will be important that efforts towards internet connectivity are mutually supportive and apply lessons learned and best practices. For instance, the World Bank African

Moonshot initiative, the GSMA M4D programme, and the Mastercard Community Pass initiative need to be integrated into this work to internet connectivity, especially in developing countries, and through multiple platforms, including satellite, cable, and others.

Building on global best practices: Lessons can be learned from Member States, especially those who have experienced rapid economic development, in how to connect rural or economically challenged communities. This is also true of private sector firms that have decades of experience connecting difficult to reach or marginalized communities.

Assess and prepare for implications of increased connectivity: Ensure that there is consideration given to both individuals and businesses, the latter, when connected, can support sustainable economic development for communities and promote trade. Work is ongoing by UN and other groups to map the legal, tax, and regulatory implications for businesses in developing countries that are coming online, connecting the work of this roundtable with the capacity building efforts of Recommendation 2 of the High-level Panel report as well as the Secretary-General's Task Force on Digital Financing.

Be ambitious and anticipate the challenges: It was also noted that given technology advances and the urgency of the challenge, perhaps the 2030 timeframe was not ambitious enough and how can this group prioritize reaching areas where people are living in the most difficult conditions, and what sustainable hardware and systems will be needed. Connectivity projects will need to carefully consider the large-scale financing structures needed to achieve this goal and the challenges and risks that will need to be overcome.

Closing remarks

The key question remains, are the ongoing efforts enough to achieve global connectivity by 2030 and if not, what are the gaps and challenges that need to be overcome. This will be a key contribution of this group to the Secretary-General's Digital Cooperation Roadmap which will be drafted in spring 2020.

Next Steps

- Key Stakeholders are invited to submit 3-4 items that they believe can be accomplished in the short-term. From there, the group can seek consensus for the top 2-3 items that will begin to address the existing gaps, recognize affiliated risks and challenges, and take the items forward.
- ITU and UNICEF will develop a 1-pager of the initiatives mentioned in the interventions during the Roundtable, including a summary of the GIGA project, and circulate to the broader group.