ITU Secretary-General's intervention at the ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment

Dialogue with UNDS Executive Heads: Supporting countries to achieve sustainable development in the current context

<mark>21:00-22:30 CET</mark> **- May 21, 2025 – UN HQ/Online**

Specialized agencies bring deep expertise to the UN Development System... 160 years of it in ITU's case...

And we bring it to the UN80 Task Force, where ITU co-leads the specialized agency cluster with ILO.

Digital connectivity is a critical enabler of development, and one of six transformative pathways to maximize country-level impact across the SDGs.

The SDG Digital Acceleration Agenda by ITU and UNDP found that 70% of the SDG targets have a digital component.

And as Secretary-General Guterres highlighted yesterday, connectivity can spur progress across all the Goals... at a time when 2.6 billion people are offline.

Despite being a smaller agency with physical presence in 13 countries, ITU supported 146 countries with digital transformation policy frameworks and technical assistance in 2024 alone.

We continue to transform digital potential into development gains in three key ways:

1. First, by supporting approximately 60 UN Country Teams and RCs.

ITU contributes to Common Country Analyses and is co-developing Digital Dashboards to equip RCs, UNCTs, and governments with actionable data for targeted interventions and results-based monitoring.

UNCTs also leverage ITU expertise through capacity building support and training.

Initiatives like the EQUALS Global Partnership co-led with UN Women to upskill 100 million women for the digital economy in this decade... and the AI Skills Coalition.... are strengthening technical skills at the country level, equipping Member States for the AI age [an area the QCPR notes we need to improve as a system].

2. **Second, ITU contributes technical expertise at the regional level through Issue-Based Coalitions on digital.**

   For example, we co-chair the IBC on Digital Transformation in Asia-Pacific... co-lead the UN Digital Transformation Group for Europe and Central Asia... and we are actively involved in the IBC for Africa.

   These coalitions enable synergies on cross-cutting issues and are important entry points for specialized agencies to support Member States with digital transformation on the ground.

3. **Third: ITU co-leads the digital transformation window of the Joint SDG Fund with UNDP.**

   The first $40M round is supporting 13 country programmes; .....with 10 more in development.

   We've seen first-hand how innovative finance to connect the unconnected makes business sense <u>and</u> transforms lives.

   For example, the Smart Islands initiative is improving resilience and access to education, ...healthcare .....and finance in the North Pacific.

The QCPR highlights the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition, with $73B in pledges now moving to implementation, as an example of effective support for improving digital inclusion and closing the digital divide.

Another example is Giga, co-led with UNICEF and highlighted in the QCPR and Global Digital Compact. Now active in 41 countries, Giga leverages emerging technologies like AI to connect every school by 2030.

The QCPR also calls us to pay attention to ensure AI does not open new digital divides or exacerbate current ones.

That's why, together with 50 UN partners, ITU is convening the AI for Good Global Summit in July, in parallel with the WSIS+20 High-Level Event…

The World Summit on the Information Society is where countries first came together around a shared vision that technology could be a force for development and opportunity for all.

ITU remains fully committed to that vision…

And to supporting our UN family in responding to Member States' needs for digital development solutions that leave no one behind.

Thank you.