

Agenda item: 1.3

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Report by the Secretary-General

WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SOCIETY DAY

Summary

The purpose of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) is to help raise awareness of the possibilities that the use of the Internet and other information and communication technologies (ICTs) can bring to societies and economies, as well as of ways to bridge the digital divide. WTISD marks the anniversary of the signature of the first International Telegraph Convention and the creation of the International Telecommunication Union on 17 May 1865.

Action required

The Council is requested **to note** the theme for WTISD-14 “**Broadband for Sustainable Development**”, which was approved by Council 2013.

The Council is also requested to **approve** the theme “**ICTs: Drivers of Innovation**” for WTISD-15 and as the overarching theme for the 150th anniversary of the Union.

Reference

[Resolution 68 \(Rev. Guadalajara, 2010\)](#)

1. Background

1.1 *World Telecommunication Day* has been celebrated annually on 17 May **since 1969**, marking the date of the founding of ITU and the signing of the first International Telegraph Convention in 1865. It was formally instituted by the Plenipotentiary Conference in Malaga-Torremolinos in 1973. In recognition of ITU as the lead United Nations agency for telecommunications and information and communication technologies, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis, November 2005, called on the United Nations General Assembly to proclaim 17 May as World Information Society Day ([see paragraph 121 of the Tunis Agenda](#)).

1.2 On 27 March 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 60/252, proclaiming 17 May as *World Information Society Day* to focus global attention annually on

bringing the enormous benefits of the digital revolution in information and communication technologies to the world's inhabitants.

1.3 The ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in November 2006 welcomed the General Assembly's decision and amended Resolution 68 to invite the Council to adopt a specific theme for each *World Telecommunication and Information Society Day*.

2. Celebration of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2014

2.1 WTISD-14 will mark the 149th anniversary of ITU, highlighting the theme: "**Broadband for Sustainable Development**", in line with ITU Plenipotentiary Resolution 68 (Rev. Guadalajara, 2010).

2.2 The World Summit on the Information Society recognized the capacity of broadband to facilitate the delivery of a broader range of services and applications, promote investment and provide Internet access at affordable prices to both existing and new users.

2.3 The Broadband Commission for Digital Development has been at the forefront of advocating the roll-out of broadband as a means of achieving sustainable development and securing *the Future We Want*.

2.4 Digital development is a transformative tool to fast-track sustainable development. In order to realize its full potential it is essential to push for the roll-out of high-speed broadband networks, making it affordable and universally accessible.

2.5 The theme for WTISD-14 will focus attention on multistakeholder commitment to achieve universal access to broadband connectivity and content and foster political will on achieving this objective; to identify key gaps in broadband research and development, infrastructure, and packaged development of applications and services; to define policy priorities for actions in the areas of allocating radio frequency spectrum for broadband, universal access obligations and innovative finance mechanisms; and to lead to technological solutions, particularly in the extension of broadband access into rural areas, least developed countries and small island developing states.

2.6 Rio+20, the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, recognized in its outcome document the critical role of ICTs in accelerating the implementation of sustainable development commitments. The Conference singled out ICTs in facilitating the flow of information between governments and the public, promoting knowledge exchange, technical cooperation and capacity building for all three pillars of sustainable development – economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

2.7 Under this overarching theme, ITU's thrust to push the broadband agenda will focus on the deployment of mobile broadband based on IMT and its evolution in IMT-Advanced technologies along with core activities in supporting earth monitoring through satellites and oceanographic radars, developing green standards and smart interventions to combat climate change, and m-Powering development.

2.8 The summary of the WTISD-14 celebrations will be reported separately in an addendum to be published after the event.

3. The theme for WTISD-15 and the 150th anniversary celebrations of ITU

3.1 The theme proposed for WTISD-15 and for the 150th anniversary celebrations of ITU is **“ICTs: Drivers of Innovation”**.

3.2 The World Summit on the Information Society recognized the importance of ICTs as the drivers of innovation, and both the Geneva Plan of Action and Tunis Commitment make several recommendations to create an environment that encourages and fosters innovation and calls upon institutions to be both responsive and supportive of research and innovation.

3.3 The theme is in line with several core activities and imperatives of the Union, such as the Broadband Commission for Digital Development, and underlies the work of several key ITU events and meetings organized by the three Sectors of the Union and ITU Telecom, including the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2014, the World Radiocommunication Conference 2015, the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly as well as the Global Symposium for Regulators and The Future Networked Car.

3.4 In a rapidly evolving global ICT environment, fostering growth and innovation at all levels – from policy-makers and industry to academia and civil society – is the key to meeting the aspirations of end-users and people around the world as we embrace the digital world.

3.5 Broadband infrastructure development is a critical element in ensuring that ICTs are used innovatively as delivery vehicles for health, education, governance, trade and commerce in order to achieve sustainable socio-economic growth. In line with the theme of World Expo 2015, innovative ICTs also help achieve food security by raising awareness of production techniques, providing real-time market information and increasing efficiencies in the distribution chain.

3.6 ICTs act as catalysts in reaching out globally to achieve the objectives set out in the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

3.7 Rio+20, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, recognized the critical role of ICTs in accelerating the implementation of sustainable development commitments. It singled out ICTs in facilitating the flow of information between governments and the public, promoting knowledge exchange, technical cooperation and capacity building for all three pillars of sustainable development – economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

3.8 Rio+20 invited the international community, including the UN system, to mainstream sustainable development within its programmes and initiatives, inviting all stakeholders to support developing countries to achieve sustainable development through green economic policies and calling for the strengthening of UN system-wide coherence and coordination.

3.9 Innovative ICTs and broadband access are now recognized as critical factors in achieving an environmentally sound and sustainable future in the post-2015 era.

3.10 Innovative measures can bridge the digital divide between countries, between cities and rural areas, and those living in differing socio-economic levels, providing new ICT opportunities.

3.11 In an era of rapid ICT development, we must ensure that ICTs are used innovatively to build a truly inclusive knowledge-based information society.

3.12 In line with ITU Plenipotentiary Resolution 68 (Rev. Guadalajara, 2010), the Council is requested to approve the theme **“ICTs: Drivers of Innovation”** for WTISD-15 and the Union’s 150th Anniversary celebrations.
