

Report by the Secretary-General

BROADBAND COMMISSION FOR DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT

Summary

This report summarizes the activities of the Broadband Commission for Digital Development during 2013 and the first half of 2014.

Action required

This report is transmitted to the Council for information.

References

[Document C13/INF/9](#)

1 Introduction

1.1 The Broadband Commission for Digital Development was established in May 2010 by ITU and UNESCO jointly, in response to the call by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Ban Ki-moon, to step up UN efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The main aim of the Commission is to highlight the importance of broadband in helping boost achievement of the MDGs, a central message supported by all Commissioners. It is chaired jointly by H.E. Mr Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda, and Mr Carlos Slim Helú, President of Fundación Slim, with ITU Secretary-General Dr Hamadoun I. Touré and UNESCO Director-General Ms Irina Bokova as co-Vice-Chairs.

1.2 There are currently some sixty Commissioners, comprising a range of senior policy-makers and top executives from governments, leading ICT firms, operators, international agencies and organizations concerned with development. The Commission follows a multi-stakeholder approach embracing a range of different perspectives, and provides ITU with an opportunity to engage with non-traditional ICT players. Many Commissioners actively promote the work of the Commission and ITU in their speaking opportunities, work and travel, ensuring that ITU's work on broadband receives attention via new channels, reaching new audiences.

2 Activities

2.1 The Commission performs an important advocacy role, emphasizing how broadband access is key to accelerating progress towards the MDGs by 2015. It explores ways in which broadband infrastructure and services can help lift people out of poverty and achieve the MDGs, and debates policy guidance and best practices for deploying broadband networks and services. The Commission provides an additional focus for ITU's contribution towards UN efforts on the MDGs in the push towards 2015, and, more recently, the process towards defining a single, integrated framework for post-2015 sustainable development.

2.2 The Commission also showcases ITU's varied activities in respect of broadband infrastructure and services, including in the domains of spectrum management, technical standardization activities, development projects and promoting an enabling policy and regulatory environment. The Broadband Commission Inter-Sectoral Group (ISG) chaired by Mr Brahim Sanou, Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), ensures that all of ITU's activities are recognised in the work of the Commission.

Main Meetings

2.3 During 2013/2014, the Commission held the following meetings:

- The Seventh Meeting of the Commission, hosted by Mr Carlos Slim Helú, co-Chair of the Commission, in Mexico City, Mexico, on 16-17 March 2013, where the Commission approved a new advocacy target calling for gender equality in access to broadband by 2020.
- The Eighth Meeting preceding the meeting of the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2013 (also accompanied by a physical meeting of the Working Group on Gender). A number of reports and [Manifesto of the Broadband Commission](#) were published at this Meeting to focus attention on key issues which the Commission has discussed (see also section below on Main Publications and Advocacy Work).
- A Special Session of the Commission was held in Davos, Switzerland, on 24 January 2014, co-hosted with the Government of Azerbaijan and the World Economic Forum, and chaired by H.E. President Kagame of Rwanda, co-Chair of the Commission. The panel and audience discussed different aspects of the key role for broadband in driving sustainable development.
- The Ninth Meeting of the Commission, was hosted by Mr Denis O'Brien, CEO of Digicel, in Dublin, Ireland, on 22-23 March 2014. This meeting will be accompanied by a meeting of the Working Group on Investment and Financing.

Main Publications and Advocacy Work

2.4 The Commission published its flagship report, "[The State of Broadband 2013: Universalizing Broadband](#)" report published in September 2013. This report evaluates the roll-out of broadband around the world and tracks progress towards achieving the [Advocacy Targets](#) set by the Commission in 2011 for boosting broadband affordability and uptake. It provides country rankings across up to 192 economies on economic impact, penetration, national broadband policy, and connecting people and dwellings.

2.5 Along with other co-authors¹, the Commission also contributed to the development of a new report, "[The ICT Opportunity for a Disability-Inclusive Development Framework](#)", which demonstrates how information and communication technologies (ICTs), can be a positive force for personal development, empowerment and institutional framework for inclusive development for the estimated 1 billion persons with disabilities who may be excluded from equitable access to resources and services (including education, healthcare, etc.). The report aims to create better understanding of the extent to which ICTs can enable and accelerate the social and economic inclusion of persons with disabilities. It lists challenges that are still to be addressed while outlining concrete actions to be undertaken by each group of stakeholders and a set of indicators to help measure progress towards the achievement of a disability-inclusive development agenda.

2.6 At the Eighth Meeting of the Broadband Commission, the Commission also published a [Manifesto of the Broadband Commission](#) as a clarion call to the international community of the importance of broadband, signed and endorsed by 48 members of the Commission, along with other prominent figures from industry, civil society and the UN family. The Manifesto states that broadband infrastructure, applications and services have become critical to driving growth, delivering social services, improving environmental management, and transforming people's lives.

Working Groups

2.7 The **Working Group on Broadband and Gender** chaired by Ms Helen Clark, Administrator of UNDP, held a meeting in Mexico City in March 2013 and one in New York in September 2013. Based on consultations with a number of renowned experts in the field of gender equality and ICTs, the group issued its report, "[Doubling Digital Opportunities: Enhancing the Inclusion of Women and Girls in the Information Society](#)", in New York in September 2013. Based on ITU's statistics and data, the report explores the extent and significance of the gender digital divide. Today, some 200 million fewer women are online than men, with women coming online later and, as a gender, more slowly than men. In some countries, twice as many men access the Internet as women. This means that women may be missing out on valuable opportunities to acquire essential ICT skills which are increasingly vital in accessing basic information, employment opportunities, better-paid jobs, new sources of income, and other applications and services.

2.8 The **Task Force on Sustainable Development**, chaired by Mr Hans Vestberg, CEO of Ericsson, launched its report, "[Transformative Solutions for 2015 and Beyond](#)", emphasizing the key role that broadband can play in delivering solutions for sustainable development. The report considers the case studies of broadband policy in five countries, where broadband has had a positive impact in delivering new services. The report concludes that broadband offers a fresh approach and set of transformative solutions in the run-up to a single, integrated post-2015 framework for sustainable development.

2.9 At the Eighth Meeting of the Commission, a new **Working Group on Financing and Investment** was launched by the consensus of the Commission to explore new and emerging issues with regards to funding the roll-out of broadband networks. The Working Group is chaired by Mr Luis Alberto Moreno, President of the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). The Working Group will hold its first meeting in Dublin on 22 March 2014, and will report back to the Tenth Meeting of the Broadband Commission in New York in September 2014.

¹ Organizations contributing to this report and its associated survey included the Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs (G3ICT), the International Disability Alliance (IDA), ITU, Microsoft, the Telecentre.org Foundation and UNESCO.