**APT VIEW[[1]](#footnote-1)  
  
Draft WTDC DECLARATION**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The 4th Meeting of the APT Preparatory Group for WTDC-21 was held as a Hybrid Meeting from 24 to 28 January 2022.

The meeting considered draft WTDC Declaration, using the draft document discussed at the 29th Meeting of the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG) as a base.

Following discussions of the contribution, the meeting agreed to the following WTDC Declaration.

1. **PROPOSAL**

The Member Administrations who attended the 4th Meeting of the APT Preparatory Group for WTDC-21 agree to the following draft WTDC Declaration for consideration at the third meeting of the Inter-Regional Meeting to Prepare WTDC-21 (IRM-3).

**Draft WTDC Declaration**

We, the high-level representatives of ITU Member States, delegates and participants **endorse the present Declaration** at the eighth World Telecommunication Development Conference, which took place [in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 6 to 15 June 2022] under the theme **Connecting the Unconnected to Achieve Sustainable Development**.

*We declare that:*

1. Telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become the foundation for every economic sector and a catalyst for improving peoples’ lives by way of social inclusion, decent employment, and personal growth. Yet, in 2021 some 3.7 billion people remain **unconnected**, and for them, the transformative power of ICTs remains untapped.
2. **COVID-19** has introduced many challenges and changed the way we live, work, learn, and do business. In the digital era, universal, secure, and affordable broadband connectivity is indispensable and provides opportunities for boosting productivity and efficiency, ending poverty, improving livelihoods and ensuring that sustainable development becomes a reality for all. Building confidence, trust and security in the use of networks and digital platforms remains a vital challenge.
3. Inequalities remain and continue to widen in the use of data and digital ICT-centric technologies, and in the **digitally skilled human resources** between regions, between and within countries in urban and rural areas, and between women and men. We recognize that available, affordable, dependable, and accessible ICTs when leveraged through adequate digital skills can provide powerful drivers for development, and are instrumental in timely, inclusive and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Capacity building in different ICT areas, including frequency spectrum management, remains a challenge.
4. **Digital inclusion** is a necessity, and insufficient digital capacity and lack of digital skills are core barriers to **digital transformation and digital economy**. The demand for digitally skilled workers will increase with the accelerated move towards digital transformation. While many jobs have been and will be lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the digital economy can nurture new ICT-centric jobs.
5. We have just nine years left to achieve the **Sustainable Development Goals**, and telecommunications/ICTs are agents of change that can shape the future for the better. Telecommunications/ICTs are instrumental in multi-stakeholder activities and sharing best practices as prescribed by the **World Summit on the Information Society**. Multi-stakeholder cooperation offers a platform for all to join forces, seize opportunities and leverage innovations offered by efficient new emerging digital technologies while mitigating risks, so that progress towards sustainable development can be made collectively.
6. **Developing countries**, and in particular Least Developed Countries (**LDCs**)**,** Land-Locked Developing Countries (**LLDCs**)andSmall Island Developing States (**SIDSs**), face additional challenges in mobilizing sufficient investment and financing for digital infrastructures and require substantial support to provide universal, secure, reliable, and affordable ICTs.

*We commit to*

1. accelerating the expansion and use of efficient and up-to-date digital infrastructures, services and applications for building and further developing digital economies and societies, including mobilization of financial resources for providing **universal, secure, and affordable broadband connectivity to the unconnected** as soon as possible. This will also include promoting **investments** in broadband infrastructure and access with a view to supporting sustainable development, encouraging cooperation between Member States and creating alliances and partnerships between public and private sectors, international funding agencies and other stakeholders.
2. urgently mitigating the impact of disasters and the **COVID-19** pandemic through bold and innovative national plans and recovery strategies for ensuring governance, business, education, and social life continuity. This includes providing the necessary platforms and networks for essential activities such as teleworking, e-commerce, remote learning, telemedicine, and digital financial services while paying special attention to the needs of women and girls, persons with disabilities and other persons with specific needs, elderly and children.
3. promoting sound, open, transparent, collaborative and future proof policy and regulatory decisions with a view to facilitating **digital transformation** in the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. We will implement innovative strategies and regulatory initiatives to bridge the widening **digital divide** by providing **universal, secure,** **and affordable** **broadband connectivity** while enhancing **trust**, **security** and **safety** of infrastructure and services. As such, we will develop and implement regulatory frameworks to ensure infrastructure resiliency, interoperability, and protection of data. Besides, we will adopt effective plans to develop and enhance **digital capacities and skills** that are required in the online world, without which the digital divide will continue to widen.
4. fully exploiting the opportunities provided by **digital transformation** of various sectors of the economy by supporting the industry, academia and private sector to unleash new and emerging technologies. We will encourage innovations to foster sustainable development and address current and future challenges, such as poverty alleviation, job creation, gender inequality, and cybersecurity. In doing so, we will put in place the needed prerequisites such as electricity, facilitate **digital inclusion** and implement evidence-based decision making to measure and maximize the impact of digital transformation.
5. providing support to and cooperate with **developing countries, LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDSs** in addressing their constraints for accessing ICT-centric new and emerging digital technologies and their integration into different sectors, such as government services, agriculture, education, health, finance, transport, etc.
6. promoting international **cooperation** among ITU Membership and development-oriented stakeholders for achieving sustainable development using ICT-centric digital technologies. We will enhance and encourage **cooperation and partnership** between developing countries and between developed and developing countries to facilitate technology and knowledge transfer with a view to promoting sustainable development and economic growth.

Accordingly, we, the delegates to the eighth World Telecommunication Development Conference, **declare our commitment** to the full and rapid implementation of **this Declaration**. We also pledge to spare no effort towards the expansion and use of digital infrastructures, applications, and services for building and establishing truly sustainable digital economies and societies.

The World Telecommunication Development Conference calls upon ITU membership as well as all development-oriented stakeholders, including those in the United Nations system, to contribute actively towards the successful implementation of **this Declaration.**

Dr. Ahmad R. Sharafat

Chair, APT Preparatory Group for WTDC-21

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1. This document was considered and accepted by consensus at the APT WTD21-4 meeting held as a hybrid meeting from 24 to 28 January 2022 (Bangkok, Thailand). The meeting was attended by the Administrations of Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Samoa, Singapore, Thailand. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)