

Statement by ITU
**First Preparatory Meeting for Fourth International Conference on Financing for
Development**

Excellencies, and distinguished colleagues,

This preparatory meeting provides among others, an opportunity to explore how universal and meaningful connectivity can help to unlock sustainable prosperity for all.

The ITU's overarching goal is to achieve universal connectivity and sustainable digital transformation by 2030. Meaningful connectivity and access to affordable and secure ICTs, is a pre-requisite for sustainable digital inclusion. Connectivity empowers everyone, it opens new pathways for development. The SDG Acceleration Agenda shows that 70% of the SDG indicators have a direct or indirect digital element, meaning that progress in meaningful connectivity contributes to progress on SDGs¹.

The ITU statistics show that, nearly 2.6 billion of the global population remains offline. The question that remains is, how can we collectively, bridge these gaps? Recognition is our starting block. Commitment to finance connectivity and access to affordable, secure, and inclusive digitals is our path forward.

The financing need for universal connectivity is not being met, and delaying investment for universal and meaningful connectivity is not an option as it will further delay the achievements of the SDG targets. Addressing the connectivity-financing challenges requires innovative financing solutions.

ITU has convened the Digital Infrastructure Investment Initiative, that is co-lead by the key global and regional development financial institutions, including the AfDB, the IsDB, the Dev Bank of South Africa, and the World Bank Group. The objective is to work in partnership between governments, investors, and private sector to identify innovative financing mechanisms to close the digital financing gap.

Financial inclusion is a gateway to sustainable development². The digital leap with mobile money platforms has made financial transactions a matter of a simple click, showing the vast potential of connectivity and inclusive digital technologies to reach diverse populations. There is an opportunity for leapfrogging when it comes to achieving the SDGs, by enhancing connectivity and adoption of digital technologies.

In conclusion, the whole world needs digital connectivity, let us reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that everyone, can benefit from the meaningful connectivity in this digital age.

¹ SDG Digital Acceleration Agenda, see <https://www.sdg-digital.org/>

² Lee-Ying Tay, Hen-Toong Tai, Geek-Siang Tan, Digital financial inclusion: A gateway to sustainable development, Helion, Volume 8, Issue 6, 2022, e09766, ISSN 2405-8440, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09766>