

Building the Business Case for Increased Connectivity: The Socio-Economic Impact of Digital Infrastructure Investments

February 11, 15:00 – 16:30 ET | Room CR-8

Date and Venue: February 11, 15:00 – 16:30 ET | Room CR-8.

Registration link: [Register here](#) (in-person only)

Organizer: International Telecommunication Union.

Co-Organizers: Government of South Africa, Government of Brazil, Government of Spain (TBC), Government of India (TBC), Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (TBC).

About the event:

In a context where, according to the UN Secretary-General¹, only 12% of the SDG targets are on track, connectivity stands out as a key enabler for achieving the 2030 agenda². However, realizing this potential requires bridging the significant investment gap in digital infrastructure – estimated as minimum USD 1.6 trillion³ – which continues to hinder progress worldwide. An enabling environment supported by robust infrastructure is essential to ensure all countries can fully leverage technological opportunities.

As outlined in the FFD4 elements paper, achieving universal connectivity requires mapping out measures to scale up investment in digital infrastructure at the national level, with support from the international community. Yet, with persistent challenges, what are the incentives for driving investments in digital infrastructure?

Assessing the socio-economic benefits of connectivity investments is essential for building a strong business case for digital infrastructure investments. Demonstrating impact not only helps attract funding but also ensures that connectivity initiatives remain financially sustainable.

Building on discussions held during the previous FFD4 preparatory sessions⁴ –including identifying barriers to digital infrastructure investments and discussing practical solutions –, this event will further explore the “business case” for universal connectivity and the multistakeholder approaches needed to move from talk to action. Through the exploration of case studies and innovative approaches, this session aims to:

- 1) Demonstrate the business case for expanding connectivity,
- 2) Discuss frameworks for measuring the socio-economic impact of digital infrastructure investments,
- 3) Facilitate dialogue among key stakeholders to advance international cooperation on digital development.

The outcomes of this session aim to inform future strategies and inspire actionable steps to accelerate global digital infrastructure development within the framework of the FFD4 conference.

¹ [Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet.](#)

² According to the ITU and UNDP (2023) SDG Digital Acceleration Agenda, 70% of the SDG targets have a direct or indirect digital component

³ DIII white paper, 2024

⁴ ITU organized sessions during the Multistakeholder Meeting (Oct 29) and the Second Preparatory Committee Session (Dec 3) with the support of the governments of Brazil, South Africa, and Spain, as well as UNICEF. These sessions fostered multistakeholder dialogue on the main challenges to digital infrastructure investments and potential solutions to address them.

Draft agenda:

FEBRUARY 11, 15:00 – 16:30	
15:00 -15:05	Welcome and opening remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">Ambassador Mathu Joyini, Permanent Representative of South Africa to the UN
15:05 -15:20	Setting the stage: Key Insights from Previous Sessions <p><i>This segment will establish the context for the upcoming conversations, offering insights into ongoing efforts under the Digital Infrastructure Investment Initiative (DIII) within the FFD4 framework. It will provide an overview of previous FFD4 discussions on digital infrastructure financing, highlighting current investment challenges and potential solutions to address them.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Alex Wong, Senior Advisor, Strategic Engagement and Initiatives, ITUMaikel Wilms, Partner and Managing Director at BCG and DIII knowledge partner
15:20 – 15:45	Case studies: The socio – economic benefits of connectivity <p><i>This segment will explore various case studies demonstrating how connectivity can transform economies, focusing on the socio-economic benefits of digital infrastructure investments.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Henri Dommel, Director of Inclusive Digital Economies, UNCDFUN Joint SDG Fund (TBC)Total Impact Capital (TBC)
15:45 – 16:25	Open discussion <p><i>Through an interactive discussion, participants will share their experiences and challenges in expanding connectivity within their countries. This segment will facilitate an exchange of ideas on the benefits of digital investments, strategies for overcoming investment barriers, and building a strong business case for advancing digital infrastructure development</i></p> Lead discussants <ul style="list-style-type: none">Jackie Cheng, Economic Affairs Officer, UNDESAGovernment of India (TBC)Government of Saudi Arabia (TBC)
16:25 – 16:30	Closing remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">José Gilberto Scandiucci Filho, Minister-Counsellor, Permanent Representation of Brazil to the UNGovernment of Spain (TBC)