



2023

YEAR IN REVIEW

BROADBAND COMMISSION
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT





MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSION

As we reflect on the accomplishments of the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development in 2023, it is evident that our shared commitment to harnessing the power of connectivity for global progress remains unwavering. With the 2023 SDG Summit measuring progress, only a fraction of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are on track at the halfway point of the 2030 Agenda. The world is in a race to achieve these Global Goals and transformative digital technologies have the potential to play a catalytic role in accelerating action for the global community.

The Broadband Commission continues to champion the imperative of making universal meaningful connectivity a reality for all. In 2023, the Commission again stressed the need for a concerted effort to ensure that people around the world are not only connected, but that they also have the skills and knowledge to use that connectivity. Innovative investment models bringing together private and public stakeholders to deliver meaningful access and content to those most in need, were also in the focus of the Commission's advocacy work in 2023.

Throughout this year, the Commission released a series of collaborative publications and actively contributed insights to global events and initiatives. These publications embody evidence-based viewpoints and offer actionable recommendations to all stakeholders, aiming to facilitate positive change and empower communities through the transformative potential of broadband for the greater good.

As we draw the curtains on 2023, another year filled with enriching discussions, impactful reports and the formation of cross-sectoral partnerships is anticipated. These initiatives are pivotal to achieve the 2025 Advocacy Targets and to contribute to major milestones of the international digital cooperation leading up to 2030.

The collaborative spirit and dedication demonstrated by each Member of the Commission fuel the collective mission to create a more connected, sustainable, and inclusive world. Together, let us embark on the journey that lies ahead, confident that our shared vision of a connected and sustainable future will continue to guide our endeavors.

ABOUT THE BROADBAND COMMISSION

The **Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development** is a high-level advocacy platform and public-private partnership fostering digital cooperation and developing actionable recommendations for achieving universal connectivity. Established in 2010 by ITU, UNESCO, and led by H.E. President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, and Mr. Carlos Slim Helú of Mexico, the Commission aims to boost the importance of broadband on the international policy agenda and expand broadband access and use to every country.

Today, the Commission is composed of around 50 members who represent a cross-cutting group of top CEO and industry leaders, senior policy-makers and government representatives, and experts from international agencies, academia and organizations concerned with development.

Learn more about us: broadbandcommission.org/about-us

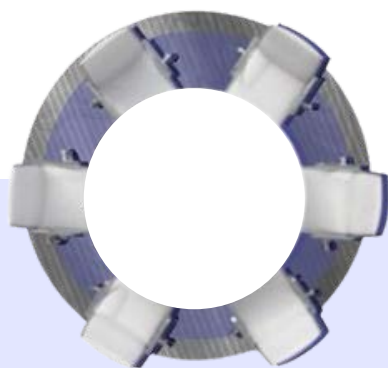


ANNUAL BREAKDOWN OVERVIEW

100+

Stakeholders engaged

This year, the Broadband Commission community engaged around **50** Commissioners, **40** external experts through Working Groups, and **10** strategic partners. In addition, we gained **700+** newsletter subscribers, **16,000+** combined followers on X (Twitter), LinkedIn, and Facebook, and **31,000+** readers who have downloaded our reports this year.

[Get involved >](#)

30+

Advocacy: Events

6 Commission Led Events

- 1 Fall meeting
- 1 AI for Good Webinar
- 1 STI Forum Side Event
- 1 WSIS session event
- 1 LDC5 side event
- 1 UNCTAD E-week event

Commissioners also participated in

- 15 UN agency led events
- 10 Private sector conferences

[Learn more >](#)

8

Thought Leadership: Publications

- 1 State of Broadband Report
- 2 Working Group Reports
- 3 Open Statements to UN processes and events
- 1 SDG5 research compilation
- 1 Advocacy Target Update Guide

[Learn more >](#)

3

Working Groups: Completed & Proposed

- 2 Completed Working Groups on Connectivity for MSMEs and Data for Learning
- 1 Working Group proposed by UNESCO for 2024

[Learn more >](#)

FUNDERS 2023

The work of the Broadband Commission would not be possible without the generous, voluntary contributions of our Commissioners.



Mr. Mats Granryd
Director General, GSMA



Mr. Denis O'Brien
Chairman, Digicel Group



H.E. Eng Majed Sultan Al Mesmar
Director General, TDRA, UAE



Mr. Hans Vestberg
CEO, Verizon Communications Inc.

ADVOCACY EVENTS 2023

Annual meetings

Broadband Commissioners convene at annual meetings to review actions needed and the next steps for reaching universal meaningful connectivity. Spring Meetings are hosted around the world at the generous invitations of Commissioners, while Fall Meetings are held in New York City on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly.

This year, our Annual Fall Meeting brought together Commissioners, leaders in the ICT field as Special Guests, and Focal Points from the private sector, governments, academia and United Nations agencies.

[Learn more >](#)

United Nations agency-led events

The Broadband Commission participated in and contributed to the following events:

- 78th Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA)
- Commission on Status of Women 67 (CSW)
- Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDC5)
- Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR)
- United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)
- International Governance Forum (IGF)
- SDG Digital
- Science, Technology and Innovation Forum (STI)
- UNCTAD eWeek
- ITU WRC23
- World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)
- Green Digital Action at COP28
- P2C Annual Meeting

Industry-led conferences and events

The Broadband Commission was also represented in the following conferences:

- GITEX Global
- GSMA's Mobile World Congress, Barcelona
- GSMA's Mobile World Congress, Kigali
- Huawei's Global Mobile Broadband Forum
- Millicom's Spotlight on Latin America
- SAMENA Telecommunications Leaders' Summit
- WEF Annual Meeting in Davos
- WEF Edison Alliance Meetings
- World Bank Group's Annual Meeting

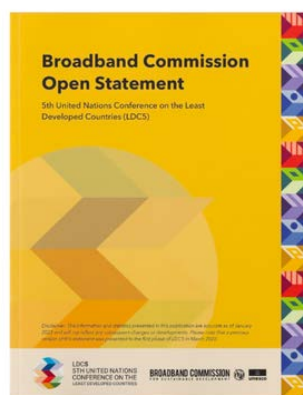
Open Statements and Input documents

The Commission provided inputs and established calls to action to contribute to global conversations and action on broadband development.



Global Digital Compact
Commission Contribution

[Read the Statement >](#)



Conference on Least
Developed Countries (LDC5)

[Read the Statement >](#)



WSIS Outcomes 2023
Commission Contribution

[Read the Statement >](#)

BROADBAND COMMISSION FALL MEETING

16 SEPTEMBER 2023, NEW YORK

United Nations Headquarters
Delegates Dining Room



Special guests included:

- H.E. Ms. Deemah AlYahya, Secretary General, Digital Cooperation Organization
- Mr. Abel Avellan, Founder, Chairman and CEO, AST SpaceMobile
- Mr. Antonio Avitabile, Managing Director Europe, Sony Venture Corporation
- Dr. Kyoung Yul Bae, President, Korea Information Society Development Institute (KISDI)
- Ms. Gabriela Egidazu, Director of Innovation for Inclusive Growth, BBVA Microfinance Foundation
- Mr. Lew Chuen Hong, CEO, Infocomm Media, Singapore
- H.E. Mr. Mondli Gungubele, Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies, South Africa
- Dr. Roslyn Layton, Senior Vice President, Strand Consult
- Ms. May-Ann Lim, Access Partnership
- Ms. Isabelle Mauro, Director General, Global Satellite Operators
- H.E. Ms. Jessica Rosenworcel, Chairperson, FCC

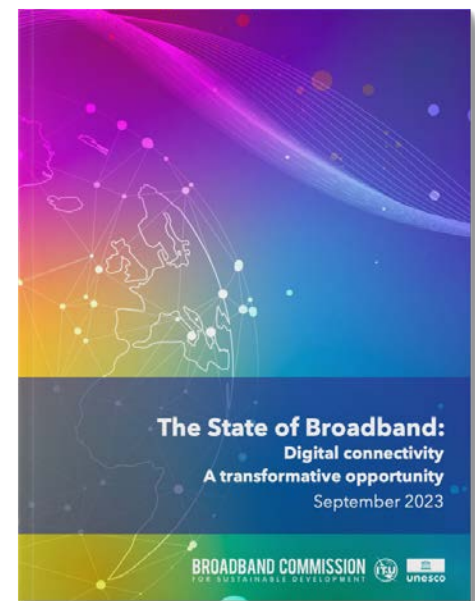
Special thanks to Mr Mats Granryd, Director General of GSMA, for generous support to the organization of the Broadband Commission Annual Fall meeting in New York on 16 September and the following reception, **as well as Commissioner Mr. Erik Ekudden**, CTO of Ericsson, for hosting and supporting the coordination of the Working Group Meetings on 15 September 2023.



THE STATE OF BROADBAND 2023

The State of Broadband annual report is a unique, global snapshot of broadband network access, use, and affordability. It is written through a collaborative framework that draws on the insights of the Commission's high-level, multistakeholder membership.

The Annual 2023 Report, titled "Digital Connectivity, a transformative opportunity", examines the shift from supply-driven to demand-driven communication access, providing insights into the financing and funding considerations required to support the next stage of connectivity for digital transformation.



[Read the report >](#)

Inside the 2023 report, you will find:

The Broadband Landscape

New Opportunities

Recent events have highlighted the critical importance of stable broadband access. The digital transformation and pandemic-driven shift have led to increased demand for digital products and services, driven by the proliferation of new internet devices and applications, and growing broadband penetration in developing markets.

Mapping Connectivity Gaps

Broadband as a Digital Foundation

With the understanding that broadband is indeed one key element for digital, the assessment of each of the 2025 Broadband Commission targets is critical to understand (1) the progress made, (2) the gaps to be bridged, (3) the urgency and importance of each of these for the future.

Key Considerations

Advancing Universal Broadband Connectivity

Despite progress in universal connectivity, with the global offline population decreasing from 2.7 billion to 2.6 billion, financing remains a challenge. This report explores the costs of achieving Broadband Commission targets and key considerations for funding the next digital transformation phase

Key Policy Considerations

1

Defining (and re-defining) measurable goals for "universal meaningful connectivity" to meet today's needs

2

Close the Usage Gap by addressing key barriers to people adopting and using the Internet where coverage is available

3

Broaden contributor base and implement creative funding approaches, including incentivising infrastructure funding, reforming USAF approaches

4

Alignment and incentivizing funding contributors is key for government connectivity plans, mobilizing all sectors' pools of capital by removing challenges and barriers to network infrastructure investment

5

Build network infrastructure policies to last with sustainable and agile plans

2025 ADVOCACY TARGETS PROGRESS UPDATE

The seven Advocacy Targets of the Broadband Commission reflect ambitious and aspirational goals and serve as a policy and programmatic guide for national and international action in broadband development.

The Commission tracks progress on the Targets in its **annual State of Broadband Report**. Using a variety of data sources, progress is estimated on these goals and multistakeholder policy recommendations are developed to suggest how to achieve them. The Commission's Working Groups also address themes related to these targets to provide more in-depth analysis and detailed recommendations for all stakeholders.



[Download the quick guide >](#)



155 countries had a national broadband plan or other digital strategic document emphasizing broadband in 2022, down from 165 in 2021. The number of economies with a broadband plan has slightly decreased, as plans have expired and haven't been renewed in some countries. While a plan is a useful starting point, it is important to know how well they are operationalized.

[Learn more >](#)



According to the ITU's 2023 Facts and Figures Report, mobile broadband and fixed broadband have become more affordable in all regions of the world and for all income groups. Where data are available, 114 out of 188 economies meet the affordability target for data-only mobile broadband, up by 11 from 2022. For fixed broadband, 71 out of 178 economies meet the target, unchanged from 2022.

[Learn more >](#)



ITU data find that approximately 77% of the world's population, or 5.4 billion people, is now online. This represents a growth of 4.7% since 2022, an increase from the 3.5% recorded from 2021 to 2022. The number of people offline in 2023 decreased to an estimated 2.6 billion people, representing 33% of the global population. Although in low-income countries internet usage rose to 27% from 24% in 2022, a significant 66 percentage point gap persists between high and low income regions

[Learn more >](#)

2025 ADVOCACY TARGETS PROGRESS UPDATE

04

PROMOTE
DIGITAL SKILLS
DEVELOPMENT



According to the latest available data from the ITU, the relatively low level of skills in countries providing data contrasts against their high share of overall Internet use – 87%. This gap between individuals using the Internet and those with digital skills demonstrates that many may be using the Internet without being able to fully benefit from it or avoid its dangers. Challenges persist with regard to the data availability and interpretation of this indicator, which limit interpretations about global digital literacy.

[Learn more >](#)

05

INCREASE
USE OF
E-FINANCE



According to the latest data from the World Bank's FINDEX survey, 64% of people aged 15 years and older made and/or received digital payments in 2021. This figure exceeds the target of 40% on a global basis. While low and lower middle-income countries and South Asia have not yet reached the target, they are on track to achieve it by 2025.

[Learn more >](#)

06

GET MSMEs
ONLINE



Connectivity data disaggregated by enterprise size is widely available for high-income nations, although not always for micro-enterprises. For most low- and middle-income countries, even aggregated data on total enterprises with Internet access is not available, let alone by sector. Hence it is difficult to gauge the severity of the problem. The nature of the connectivity is also important. A one-person microenterprise might find having a smartphone with wireless access sufficient to carry out operations, particularly for social media-based online selling.

[Learn more >](#)

07

BRIDGE
THE GENDER
DIGITAL DIVIDE



According to the latest ITU estimates, 70 per cent of all men were using the Internet in 2023 compared to 65 per cent of women. Gender parity increased from 0.90 in 2019 to 0.92 in 2023. Some regions and income groups have achieved gender parity in Internet usage, including some among high-income countries, SIDS, Latin America and the Caribbeans, CIS countries, and Europe. However, despite increases in gender parity, women account for a disproportionate – and increasing – share of the global offline population. In fact, women now outnumber male non-Internet users by 17 per cent, up from 11 per cent in 2019.

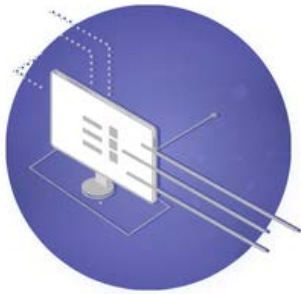
[Learn more >](#)

WORKING GROUPS 2023 OVERVIEW

With close to 40 groups to date, the Broadband Commission's Working Groups convene industry leaders, government officials and civil society to address prominent issues affecting broadband access, affordability and use. These groups are proposed, funded, and chaired by Commissioners, with the content support of external experts.

[View all Working Groups >](#)

2023 Completed Working Groups



Data for Learning

The Working Group on Data for Learning was launched to discuss the broad theme of education data across three dimensions: infrastructure, capacities, and governance, meeting monthly for the past two years. Chaired by Ms. Audrey Azoulay, Director General of UNESCO, the Working Group promotes sustainable multistakeholder partnerships that advance impactful and ethical applications of education data that benefit all learners.

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Drawing from nearly two years of discussions, the Working Group report "[The Transformational Potential of Data for Learning](#)" and its accompanying "[Job Board for Data Governance and Management in the Education Sector](#)" are global public goods that contribute to our common understanding of how to close the digital data divide and improve data practices in education.



Connectivity for MSMEs

The Working Group on Connectivity for MSMEs, co-chaired by Ms. Pamela Coke-Hamilton, Executive Director of the ITC, and Mr. Mats Granryd, Director General of the GSMA, sought to identify the challenges and opportunities of getting more micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) online and engaging in online trade.

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Through interviews with Working Group members and external experts, and extensive research into the barriers and enablers of MSME connectivity, the Working Group published "[Making Digital Connectivity Work for MSMEs](#)," a five-part framework and four core recommendations for all stakeholders to play their part in enabling MSME connectivity.

ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS & OUTREACH

WEB

The website, www.BroadbandCommission.org, continues to serve as a one-stop-shop for all information related to the Commission's activities, publications, and policy recommendation outputs.

31,000+ downloads

This year's 31,000+ downloads of Broadband Commission reports demonstrate a sustained uptrend in readership.



3 Original Advocacy Campaigns

SOCIAL



Earth Day: Digital Spring Cleaning (April)



SDG Digital Video Contributions (September)



MSME Day: Connectivity Impact Story Series and Webinar (June)

Advocacy Toolkits

Working Groups developed dedicated advocacy campaigns to promote the findings and recommendations in their reports.

- [Connectivity for MSMEs](#)
- [Data for Learning](#)

NEWS

This year, the subscriber base to our newsletter organically grew to **over 750 recipients**.

9 newsletters distributed

Newsletters detailed the global state of broadband development and shared the work of the Commission and its members.

20+ articles published

Articles this year provided examples of Commissioners putting our policy recommendations in action, including deep dives into initiatives and partnerships working to bridge the digital divide. These also highlighted the Commission's participation in UN events like STI Forum, WSIS, UNCTAD E-week, and HLPF.

ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS

Digital Spring Cleaning

Did you know that digital technologies generate up to 4% of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide? These emissions are caused by the production, distribution, charging, end-of-life, and general utilization of ICTs. As part of our Earth Day campaign, the Broadband Commission engaged with Commissioners and the global broadband community to delete over 1 million emails and educate them on how to minimize future digital impact from emails.

[View campaign >](#)



Celebrating MSMEs

In celebration of Micro- Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises Day (MSME Day), designated by the UN General Assembly on June 27th, in collaboration with the co-chairs of the Working Group on Connectivity for MSMEs, the Broadband Commission spotlighted small businesses that have used digital tools and connectivity to grow their businesses. Check out the stories and submit your own.

[View campaign >](#)

SDG Digital

In support of SDG Digital, Commissioners offered insights into the various use cases for how digital technologies can accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs, highlighting the crucial importance that everyone plays in harnessing the power of digital for a brighter future.

[View campaign >](#)



PARTNERS

The Broadband Commission collaborates with a variety of partners to support our work and fulfill our common goal of advancing universal connectivity.

We are grateful for the number of organizations listed below that have worked with us to advance this goal.



United Nations
Office of the Secretary-General's
Envoy on Technology



United Nations



**Common
Agenda**



**Child Online
Protection**



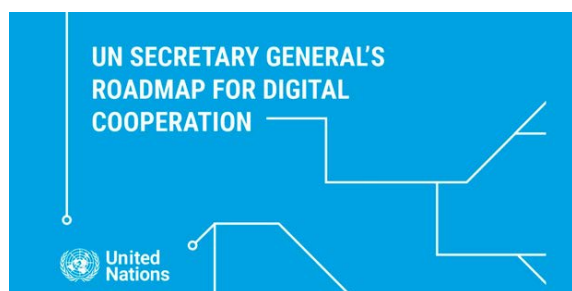
Partner2Connect



**Generation
Connect**



Connect2Recover



**Access
Partnership**

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