
Open Letter from the Broadband Commission for Digital Development to the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference 2014

28 October 2014

The Broadband Commission for Digital Development¹ addresses this Open Letter to the Delegates attending the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 20 October – 7 November 2014.

We, the *ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Digital Development*, affirm our sincere conviction and belief in the vital role of broadband in transforming our economies and our society. We urge all delegates to the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference 2014 to show their support for the global roll-out of broadband infrastructure and broadband-enabled applications and services to grow the digital economy and empower societies around the world.

Developing countries cannot afford to remain on the sidelines, as the global digital revolution raises established knowledge economies into a dominant position. Governments around the world must strive to connect the unconnected and to continue to invest in ICTs and digital e-skills as an engine of inclusion, economic growth and development.

This economic growth must be sustainable, inclusive, innovative, and carried out in partnership with stakeholders from Government, industry and academia. To this end, we urge Plenipotentiary delegates to enhance their National Broadband planning process so ICTs and broadband can catalyze socio-economic development.

¹ The Broadband Commission for Digital Development, launched in May 2010 by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), comprises government leaders from around the world along with top industry leaders and representatives of international agencies, and organizations concerned with development. The full list of Broadband Commissioners can be found at: www.broadbandcommission.org.

Infrastructure is a necessary pre-condition for sustainable economic growth, but not sufficient. It is also necessary to promote investments in advanced online services, local content and services, and media information literacy development to address inequity and deliver digital inclusion for all. For global broadband roll-out to contribute most to development, people must be empowered to transform information into knowledge for lifelong learning and digital skills, for their own benefit, as well as that of their community. It is also vital to ensure the availability of relevant broadband-enabled content, applications and services in local languages. Availability of content in local languages becomes all the more important, as ICTs are integrated into education and learning processes, to ensure that online learning is available, accessible and inclusive.

Furthermore, we urge ITU Member States to continue to push for inclusion of ICTs and broadband as key enabling transformative technologies in the post-2015 development agenda. The link between broadband and development is undeniable. Let us grasp this once-in-a-generation moment to strive for a world where every citizen can potentially experience the opportunities and benefits provided through affordable access and connectivity to ICTs.

Digital inclusion is of paramount importance to ensure that no one, and no society, is left behind. We urge the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference to connect the world with broadband as a top priority for continued economic growth and social digital inclusion.

[Original] Signed,

Co-Chairs & co-Vice Chairs

On behalf of the ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Digital Development