

WSIS Forum 2020
“WSIS UN Regional Commissions Meeting Round Table”
UN Regional Commissions

9 September 2020, 12:00-13:00 CEST (UCT+2:00) (1 hour)

Concept Note (draft)

Venue: Zoom Webinar (Provided by ITU for all WSIS Forum 2020 workshop organizers. UN regional representatives only)

Background:

While COVID-19 lockdowns have turned our physical lives into a virtual reality almost overnight, digital connectivity has taken on a compelling new meaning in the region. For one, countries that have managed to put digital technologies to effective use have shown signs of better combating cluster outbreaks and gaining the public’s trust by sharing credible information in a timely way. Digital platforms have also helped maintain livelihoods and enabled the effective delivery of high value-added professional services, while new products such as 3D printing of masks, disinfecting robots and software applications have boomed. However, this is only possible with universal access to affordable and reliable broadband internet all the time. Even for those that have access, quality (speed and delays) and affordability often keep the Internet out of reach. This entails tackling the digital divide from both the supply and demand side. Failing to do so, the digital divide threatens to become the new face of inequality, exacerbating not only income inequality but in opportunity as well.

On the supply side, it requires building digital infrastructure that can provide safe, inclusive, affordable, and reliable internet access for all. On the demand side, there is the need to invest in digital literacy for all children, paying special attention to the education sector to avoid non-connected children from falling behind their connected peers in irreversible ways. There is also the need to embed digital skills formation as a part of lifelong learning among communities. An expanding multigenerational consumer base coupled with rising per capita income, increases the business case for investing in infrastructure and expands purchasing power parity options.

In the future, we can expect that multiple crises, especially climate related extreme events, will converge. We need to prepare today by building more resilient infrastructure, we need digital networks that can absorb sudden surges in internet demand and withstand destructive disasters.

Objectives:

This roundtable session promotes information sharing among UN Regional Commissions on their respective programmes and activities for the implementation of the WSIS action lines. It also promotes the sharing of regional experiences and perspectives on the role of digital technology in a COVID-19 world.

Tentative Programme

9 September 2020, 12:00-13:00 (CEST)

Ms. Tiziana Bonapace, Director, ICT and DRR Division (ESCAP)	Chair	2min 12:00-12:02
Representatives*:		
Mr. Jorge Patino, Head of Logistics (ECLAC)	Report ECLAC activities	9 min 12:02-12:11
Mr. Haidar Fraihat, Director of Technology for Development Division (ESCWA)	Report ESCWA activities	9 min 12:11-12:20
Mr. Jean-Paul Adam, Director of Technology, Climate and Natural Resources (ECA)	Report ECA activities	9 min 12:20-12:29
Mr. Jose Palacin, Senior Economics Affair Officer (ECE)	Report ECE activities	9 min 12:29-12:38
Ms. Tiziana Bonapace, Director, ICT and DRR Division (ESCAP)	Report ESCAP activities	9 min 12:38-12:47
Discussions	Opportunities for joint projects and studies	12 min 12:47-13:59
Closing		1 min 13:59-14:00