



# Collaboration and connectivity at ITU Telecom World 2019

**T**echnology has been central to development throughout the course of human history. The rapid growth of information and communication technologies (ICTs) across the world proves this fundamental connection on an unprecedented scale – and with revolutionary impact.

Today, it could be said that all development is linked to digital development: from education to transportation, urban planning, sanitation, health, manufacturing, industry and, of course, communication, there is no industrial sector today that does not rely on ICTs as the essential backbone infrastructure providing access to services – and the associated benefits of social and economic development.

At the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the specialized United Nations agency for ICTs, one of our priorities is to ensure that those benefits are made available to all of the world's population, not just a limited few. ITU is committed to connecting all the world's people, wherever

they live and whatever their means. And we are certain that connectivity, and the ICT services, products and solutions it enables, is essential to meeting every one of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

But how can we accelerate universal connectivity and the development it brings when nearly half of the people in the world remain offline? The ICT sector is working with us towards an ambitious long-term goal of connecting the next 1.5 billion citizens by 2020. This will require not only enormous investment in networks and other infrastructure, but also – crucially – significant political commitment.

Infrastructure alone, however, is not enough. According to ITU, around 90% of the world's population is covered by at least 2G or 3G services – yet adoption remains at barely 51%. So for connectivity to be meaningful, to actually reach people and change lives, we need to offer affordable, fit-for-purpose services and equipment. We need local content in local languages, relevant to local context. And





we need programmes to raise awareness of the benefits of connectivity, as well as to teach the digital skills essential to taking full advantage of this potential.

Digital literacy is just as important for meaningful connectivity as cheap handsets or 3G networks in rural and remote areas. Innovation and inclusivity are as vital as infrastructure and investment.

It's clear that neither public nor private sector can go it alone. The task of connecting the whole world is as enormous as the developmental benefits it will bring. The leadership, resources and skills required are as great as the impact it will have. Government must work closely with the private sector, with all stakeholders throughout the digital ecosystem, with NGOs and international organizations, with civic society, communities, academia and media.

Public private partnerships, in whatever form, are the key to driving meaningful connectivity and bringing the world online. This is where ITU's leading annual event, ITU Telecom World, has such an important role to play. By bringing together leaders from government, industry, regulatory bodies, international agencies, consultants and academia from developed and emerging markets alike, the event works towards meeting the SDGs through digital technology, focusing efforts on infrastructure, investment, innovation and inclusivity.

It features an international exhibition of tech solutions and projects, a world-class forum of interactive, expert-led debates, an Awards Programme, and a networking programme connecting organizations, nations, individuals and ideas.

The ITU Telecom World Awards Programme, in particular, is an opportunity to encounter, engage with - and celebrate - the best in innovative tech solutions with very real social impact.

Open to both CSR initiatives of large companies and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the Awards

recognize ICT applications, products and solutions directly addressing developmental needs, whether on a local, smaller scale or through global outreach.

It is a platform recognizing corporate efforts to accelerate development through technology, and providing global exposure for innovative projects at the forefront of meaningful connectivity.

The international visibility, UN credibility and access to networking, investment potential and partnerships offered by the Awards has proved highly valuable since the programme's introduction in 2015 - and is an excellent stage for precisely those public-private collaborations so essential to growing connectivity.

Additionally, the event provides a powerful stage for exhibiting the projects, technologies and ideas that are driving development at local, national and international levels on the showfloor, as well as attending the Forum debates on "Innovating together: connectivity that matters" to learn, network and share knowledge. Innovative ideas in the Forum; innovative solutions in the exhibition; and innovative cooperation across nations, sectors and organizations - these are our goals at ITU Telecom World, as we work together towards universal access.

ITU Telecom World's combination of influential audience, uniquely international perspectives and in-house ITU expertise have established its importance as an informed, valued platform for building the partnerships that can drive ICT adoption, meet the SDGs and improve lives everywhere through technology.

Held this year in HungExpo, Budapest, Hungary, from 9 - 12 September, ITU Telecom World 2019 is, of course, only one small step towards connecting the world. Every step counts, however, on the journey to accelerate development throughout the world through technology. And together, we can make those steps larger, longer and more effective.