



20th World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Symposium (Geneva, 2025)

*WTIS@20: The past, present and future of
digital development statistics*

Speech

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Opening remarks, WTIS 2025
9:30, Monday, 22 September 2025
Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava,
Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU
International Telecommunication Union

WTIS 2025 Chair, Ms Apolonija Oblak Flander, Director-General of the National Statistics Office, Slovenia,

Mr Tomas Lamanauskas, Deputy Secretary-General of ITU,

Mr Paul Cheung and our other distinguished speakers,

Participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning and welcome!

It is my great pleasure to open this session of the World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Symposium, a milestone anniversary - or otherwise known as a vigentennial.

This year's World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Symposium is the 20th edition of the Symposium since it was first held in 1996.

Over three decades, this symposium has become the foremost global forum for digital development statistics.

It is amazing to reflect on how much this forum has evolved over the years and how much it has achieved , thanks to your efforts and the efforts of those who were part of WTIS in the past years but have since moved on.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Your work is crucial in tracking progress towards universal and meaningful connectivity and, with it, digital transformation for the benefit of all.

The message I wish to re-convey today is simple.

Data is key to fulfilling our vision but not just any data.

To make real progress, we need internationally comparable data that is granular, regular and reliable.

Too often, these attributes are missing, leaving policymakers to work with incomplete or outdated information.

At ITU, we are committed to helping countries close these gaps.

Over the past year, we have held eight regional workshops on "Promoting and measuring universal and meaningful connectivity", from the Pacific to the Caribbean and in-between enroute to Africa where we will organise three workshops in the coming months.

We are also focusing on strengthening the capacity of individuals, organizations, communities to achieve their goals by enhancing skills, knowledge, and resources.

I am pleased to inform you that on Friday in this very room, we will hold the first practitioner workshop for those attending the annual meeting of our expert groups on ICT indicators, EGTI and EGH.

Dear Colleagues,

Alongside these efforts, we are pioneering methods for leveraging big data for statistics and helping countries to adopt them.

Our approach is to work hand in hand with partners at country, regional and global levels to scale up efforts build on our respective strengths and provide holistic solutions to ICT measurement.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We need to embrace three things: creativity, improvement and innovation. Creativity is the seed. Improvement is the refinement triggering convergent thinking. And, innovation is the fruit or the birth of new data tools approaches and practices.

In this regard, it is my pleasure to announce that tomorrow at 14h00 (2 O'clock), we'll hold an information session to showcase some of our latest products including new features on the ITU DataHub. You are all cordially invited to attend.

Now let us confront the bull in the room, that is Financing Statistics. It is evident that financing statistics, especially digital inclusion surveys, remains a perennial challenge. This was also explicitly acknowledged in the Global Digital Compact adopted last year. For this reason, this Symposium will feature a session dedicated to the issue. But, we also recognize that it is not only financing that is missing.

Too often, political will to invest in and use data is also lacking.

Without a data culture among decision-makers, progress will be slow.

That is why we have made it a priority to reach decision-makers advocating for Universal and Meaningful Connectivity and its measurement in many international fora.

In June, BDT organised the first summer school on evidence-based digital policies together with UN University, and at our regional workshops, we systematically have been inviting policymakers to sit and engage with statisticians.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are not sitting and just warming the chair, but walking and working with purpose!

As I conclude, we are all aware cognisant of the expanding measurement agenda, limited resources, and the pressure to achieve the much-needed independence in data collection and use. But knowledge without action does not move the needle!

It is in this context that this global symposium offers hope inspiration and ultimately, solutions.

Let us continue to collaborate and partner. I thank the European Union. Since 2023, ITU and the international community have benefitted from the EU funded project on Promoting and Measuring Universal and Meaningful Connectivity.

With these words, I wish you an inspiring and productive Symposium. Once again, welcome to WTIS-25 and happy anniversary!

Thank you.