



Measuring the Information Society Report 2016



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2016



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It is my pleasure to present to you the latest edition of the *Measuring the Information Society Report*. This annual report presents a global and regional overview of the latest developments regarding information and communication technologies (ICTs), based on internationally comparable data and agreed methodologies. It aims to stimulate the ICT policy debate in ITU Member States by providing an objective assessment of how countries have performed in the field of ICT and by highlighting areas that need further improvement.



One of the core features of the Report is the ICT Development Index (IDI). This year's results show that nearly all of the 175 countries covered by the index improved their IDI values between 2015 and 2016. During the same period, stronger improvements have been made on ICT use than access, mainly as a result of strong growth in mobile-broadband uptake globally. This has allowed an increasing number of people, in particular from the developing world, to join the information society and benefit from the many services and applications provided through the Internet.

This year, for the first time, the Report also shows countries' rankings according to their improvement in IDI value. The results show strong improvements in performance throughout the world; a number of middle-income developing countries in particular are reaping the benefits of more liberalized and competitive ICT markets that encourage innovation and ICT uptake across all sectors.

Despite these encouraging developments, we need to focus on the countries that are among the least connected in the world. Urgent action is required to address this persistent digital divide if we want to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For example, the Report shows that in some low-income countries, between 20 and 40 per cent of people still do not own a mobile phone and that the gender gap in mobile phone ownership is substantially higher.

This year's Report takes a closer look at barriers to Internet uptake. New data show that while 84 per cent of the world's people live in an area where mobile-broadband services are offered, only 47 per cent are actually using the Internet. While infrastructure deployment is crucial, high prices and other barriers prevent people from entering the digital world.

The price of the service (and of the device) remains a critical determinant for whether people make use of ICTs. I am pleased to see that, globally, the prices for fixed and mobile communication services continued to fall over the past year. The reduction in mobile-broadband prices is particularly pleasing, as it leads not only to more people being connected to the Internet but also to more intense Internet usage among those who are already online.

The availability and affordability of high-speed fixed-broadband services nevertheless remain a challenge in the majority of low-income countries. In the world's least developed countries, a fixed-broadband plan with a minimum of 1GB of data per month still corresponds, on average, to over 60 per cent of GNI per capita. In addition, in those least developed countries where the service is offered, speed and quality are usually lower than in developed countries. This is a constraint not only for the domestic business sector but also in

terms of using ICTs to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), through e-agriculture, e-health, e-education, e-governance, gender equality, just to mention a few.

Education and income levels are strong determinants, not only of whether or not people use the Internet, but also of how they use it. The Report finds that Internet users with higher levels of education use more advanced services, such as e-commerce and online financial and government services, to a higher degree than Internet users with lower levels of education and income levels, who use the Internet predominantly for communication and entertainment purposes.

In line with the more integrated development approach adopted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ITU is working in close cooperation with other United Nations agencies and the private sector to raise awareness of and harmonize development policy approaches in order to create an enabling collaborative environment. This - with no doubt- will help us leverage the full potential of ICTs for the achievement of socio-economic development for all.



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