

ITU Statement for the STI Forum 2025 Briefing to Member States and Stakeholders

3 March 2024, 3:00pm-4:00pm, CR2, UN Headquarters, New York

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Colleagues,**

Thank you very much for the opportunity to deliver this statement. First, we congratulate the co-chairs of the STI Forum 2025, the Permanent Representatives of Finland and Morocco, on their appointment.

Since the inception of the STI Forum, ITU has been a key contributor, and we look forward to contributing again this year. To offer a few examples:

For the thematic session on “Scaling up STI financing and capacity building”, we have suggested including the theme of **digital infrastructure financing**, which is linked to 70% of the SDG targets. The lack of adequate digital infrastructure remains a major barrier, particularly in low- and lower-middle-income countries. Achieving universal connectivity requires substantial investment, estimated at a minimum of \$1.6 trillion. Closing this gap demands maximizing the impact of traditional investments while also identifying innovative financing models and solutions. Connecting the remaining 2.6 Billion people who remain offline, is critical to advancing STI around the world.

We launched the **Digital Infrastructure Investment Initiative (DIII)** last year in collaboration with the Brazilian G20 presidency. Co-led by seven development finance institutions and supported by a working group of more than 40 organizations, the initiative focuses on innovative financing mechanisms to catalyze digital infrastructure investments. ITU is also advocating for digital infrastructure financing to be a key focus at the upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development. As part of the preparatory process, we have submitted a policy brief and proposed a set of concrete initiatives as potential conference outcomes, including:

- a Technical Forum with Development Finance Institutions (DFIs),
- a Digital Infrastructure Investment Transaction Platform, and
- a knowledge hub on Innovative Financing for Connectivity.

Another topic we are having to showcase during STI week is our ongoing initiative on the metaverse and virtual worlds, focusing on the potential of these technologies to advance the SDGs. This includes envisioning the cities of tomorrow and leveraging virtual twins for efficiency and planning.

Building on the success of last year’s AI for Good interactive lab that we held with DESA on the day before the STI Forum, ITU, WIPO, WHO, DESA, and the Office of the President of

ECOSOC plan to once again bring this lab to the STI Forum. This Lab will showcase AI-driven solutions and provide hands-on opportunities to experience innovations that can accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

Finally, in other STI news, we are pleased to share that the annual WSIS Forum this year, called **WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025**, will take place from 7 to 11 July in Geneva, co-hosted with the Swiss Confederation and co-organized with UNESCO, UNDP, and UNCTAD, alongside the **AI for Good Summit** from 8-11 July co-organized with over 40 UN agency partners. We will also hold the main commemoration for ITU's 160th anniversary this year. Such events also provide an opportunity to continue discussions from the STI Forum and STI Week.

Thank you.