Background Paper
The Global Internet Governance Forum (IGF) 2022

Commonwealth Hard Talk for Action

Session Title:
Commonwealth Hard Talk for Action

Duration:
60 min

Theme:
Connecting All People and Safeguarding Human Rights

Introduction
Article 19 of the the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states: "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice." This statement speaks to the right of every individual to communicate and in this regard, it is incumbent on Governments to ensure that the means for communication are available to all.

Communication is an essential part of the development process. Technology-driven development can only reach its full potential if all citizens, urban and rural and remote populations are informed and engaged in their communities able to exercise their right to communicate. Information and communication and technologies (ICT) not only provide the means for citizens to communicate but can play a significant role in overcoming the barriers that hinder development such as illiteracy, financial exclusion, and physical isolation. More importantly, ICT, in its most pervasive manifestation, the Internet, have the potential to connect individuals, provide information and facilitate collaboration and the exchange of ideas. Connectivity to ICT is the starting point for digital democracies and is a significant enabler for the attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030. Governments must therefore commit to facilitating access to ICT for all citizens, whether they live in urban, rural, or remote communities or are persons with disabilities, women and other vulnerable groups.

Human rights are at the centre of a society's well-being and must be protected. The United Nations human rights revolve around peace, mutual respect and dignity. ICT facilitates the realisation of many human rights such as freedom of expression, the participation in democratic and political processes, the ability for all people to be educated, to access information without fear or discrimination. Concurrently, ICT facilitate the violation of many of these human rights resulting for example in child exploitation, human trafficking bullying and fraudulent activities, In an interconnected digital environment, measures must also be taken to assure these rights are enjoyed by all and the risks are mitigated.

Making broadband affordable is a critical step to achieving meaningful universal connectivity. One of the seven Advocacy Targets of the ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission is to ensure that by 2025, entry-level broadband services are made affordable in low- and middle-income countries at less than 2% of monthly Gross National Income (GNI) per capita. While over the last decade prices have been declining, affordability gaps have

persisted or widened over the past years.[1] As societies become more reliant on technology for everyday tasks, care must be taken to assure citizens' human rights are assured and protected.

It is therefore necessary to create an enabling environment of policies, legislation and regulations is essential for attaining the goal of affordable universal access for fostering development while protecting human rights.

Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation
The Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO) is the largest and oldest Commonwealth membership organisation committed to helping its members adopt ICT appropriately and effectively for sustainable development. The CTO is committed to helping Commonwealth countries leverage the potential of ICT to achieve the 2030 SDG agenda while protecting the inalienable rights of their citizens.

In this era of rapid technological innovation and the COVID-19 pandemic many countries, having realised that ICT are now vital for social and economic development and are moving to accelerate adoption and providing affordable universal broadband for all their citizens. The CTO recognising the negative impact of COVID-19 on the achievement of the 2030 SDG Agenda in least developed and developing countries and small islands, is taking steps to to provide support for accelerated digital transformation to the Commonwealth and beyond.

The CTO also recognises that the response to pandemics and other emerging challenges will require greater collaboration and cooperation amongst many diverse players, including the public and private sectors and unity and solidarity. The CTO will facilitate the establishment and strengthening of cooperative and collaborative mechanisms for action and impact.

The goal is to ensure that every citizen has affordable connectivity with meaningful and safe access to the information networks and that governments adopt ICT effectively to improve the quality of government service delivery while educating on and protecting their rights online.

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[1] Achieving the 2025 advocacy targets by the Broadband Commission
https://broadbandcommission.org/advocacy-targets/

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Session Overview
The Commonwealth Hard Talk for Action session seeks to cut through the platitudes and excuses for the not attaining affordable universal broadband connectivity and taking the necessary measures for ensuring the protection of human rights in an increasingly digital world.

Agenda Items

1. The need for political will to provide affordable universal broadband connectivity.

2. The signs that human rights are not being supported in the digital environment and protection of human rights online:
   a. The negative effects of social media
   b. Cyber-crime
   c. Human trafficking
   d. Loss of privacy
   e. Protection of intellectual property

3. Leveraging infrastructure and technology innovation and development:
   a. Emerging technologies such as satellite, fibre, and wireless networks, can significantly improve last mile connectivity and may be used to expand meaningful access?
   b. Addressing the energy requirements

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Time (Minutes)	Topic	Proposed Presenter
05	Introduction	**Ms. Bernadette Lewis** Secretary General Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation
15	Engendering Political Will for providing affordable universal broadband connectivity	**Hon. Syed Amin Ul Haque** Minister for Information Technology & Telecommunication Islamic Republic of Pakistan
10	Options for affordable universal broadband connectivity and the energy imperative. for	**Mr. Lacina Kone** Director General SMART Africa
10	Safeguarding Human Rights in a Hyper-connected world	**Dr. Rosa Persendt** Snr Lecturer: Contemporary Social Issues University of Namibia
15	Discussion	
05		