



## IGF 2020 Messages

### Environment

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*Note: this is a living document being put out for public comment. A final version will be published 3 weeks after IGF ends. For any questions or feedback regarding the IGF 2020 Messages, please write to [igf@un.org](mailto:igf@un.org).*

#### Messages related to Overarching Policy Question 1

**How can the benefits of the Internet and digital technologies continue to be harnessed (capacity for greater inclusiveness of marginalised communities, etc.) while at the same time reducing their environmental and climate impacts throughout the lifecycle, from creation to use to disposal of digital devices?**

- The digital divide poses a challenge: People need to be connected, but in a sustainable way.
- With studies showing a negative correlation between increasing digitalisation and progress towards the UN 2030 Agenda’s climate and environmental goals, unless there are significant and rapid efforts by all stakeholders to find and deploy solutions to reverse this trend, bringing connectivity to the remaining three billion unconnected people could have major ramifications for global survivability. The scale of the challenge means that no stakeholder can afford not to be part of the process to reduce the impact of digital technologies they create, use and discard at the end of the technology lifecycle.
- Governments and the private sector need to develop standards for environmentally responsible creation, use and disposal of digital technologies.
- Environmental legal principles, such as the “precautionary principle”, provide a basis for developing sustainable digital technologies that can minimise and prevent the harmful impacts that today’s adoption of digital technologies have often led to.

## Messages related to Overarching Policy Question 2

**How can the Internet and digital technologies be further developed and leveraged, particularly by sectors that traditionally have not considered themselves to be stakeholders in digital and Internet policy (such as the agricultural sector, construction industries, and retail supply chain) to aid in combating climate change and environmental degradation and instead promote sustainable, inclusive economies?**

- Accurate data and data measurement is essential to helping address sustainability goals. Much of this data already is being collected, but not necessarily shared, or available easily for stakeholders to act on. Online platforms and AI developers can play a key role in enabling this by storing, aggregating, and analysing and sharing this data in interoperable formats.

## Messages related to Overarching Policy Question 3

**How can the Internet's infrastructure be made more resistant to damage caused by climate change related weather events and how can the Internet be leveraged, through developments such as big data, distributed networks of Internets of Things, and community networks, to monitor and provide alerts when infrastructure, systems and ecosystems face imminent threats or have sustained damage, with the aim of repairing life?**

- The decentralised nature of the Internet, with most of the core infrastructure having multiple redundancies, means there is less likely to be a single point of failure during any incident resulting in physical damage to part of the network, and the Internet can act as a vital communications mechanism during times of disaster. However, at the more localised level, connectivity can be severed, and prevent first responders from knowing where they are needed, and preventing data from other forms of infrastructure (roads, train lines, dams, sensors on buildings and in water bodies, etc,) alerting caretakers to potentially deadly compromises to the infrastructure's integrity.
- As with other infrastructure, providers of ICT infrastructure and services need to engage in disaster planning, particularly in a world where climate change is resulting in an increased rate of severe weather, resulting in not only more flooding but also landslides, more extreme temperatures and wind-related damage.
- There is a need for ongoing investment in disaster-resistant Internet and digital infrastructures that can continue to provide access to services and applications, such as environmental monitoring via Internets of Things, after disasters, or increased levels of usage following crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.