



POLICY STATEMENT

ICT, POLICY AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Prepared by the ICC Commission on the Digital Economy



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THE INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (ICC)

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I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for several advances by the year 2030.¹ Although access to and deployment of information communication technology (ICT) are cited as specific targets in only four of the SDGs (4, 5, 9 and 17), ICT plays a role in the realization of all of the SDGs.²

This policy statement will illustrate how ICT is equipping populations with tools to relieve poverty³, access education, provide healthcare and reduce CO₂ emissions.⁴ To sustain opportunities in the long run and ensure efforts are impactful across geographies and cultures, the statement explains how the ICT ecosystem works and the contributions business and other relevant stakeholders bring to policy-making efforts.

The diagram below presents an overview of the components needed to leverage ICT for sustainable economic development and their inter-relationship. This diagram will be used throughout this policy



1 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>
 2 <https://www.ericsson.com/res/docs/2015/ict-and-sdg-interim-report.pdf>
 3 <http://csr.cisco.com/casestudy/living-goods-partner>
 4 http://www.wwf.se/source.php/1183710/identifying_the_1st_billion_tonnes_ict.pdf

statement to underscore the ways in which policy choices within and across each of these components can impact the potential of ICT to be leveraged for societal benefit.

- > At the centre, the infrastructure, applications and services, and user engagement layers make up the **ICT ecosystem**. These highlight the foundational role of ICT and how the different ICT functions are built on top of each other to deliver value to users.
- > The multi-coloured ring represents the different **policy issues (economic, technical, social/cultural, governance)** that arise through the use and development of ICT. These policy issues can be overlapping and need the experience and expertise of relevant stakeholders: business, civil society, technical community and government to be addressed effectively.
- > The ring around the policy issues represents the stakeholder groups that should collaborate to address evolving policy issues at hand.
- > The outer layer represents sustainable economic development opportunity, and as the diagram suggests, this is dependent on the intrinsic layers: involvement of all relevant stakeholders in policy-making and an interoperable, open, seamless and secure ICT ecosystem where the user engagement, application and services, and infrastructure lie at the core.

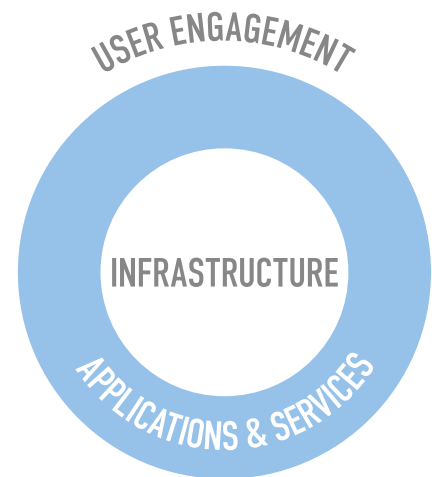
To provide further context on each of the layers and how the components work together, the following sections will present each component in greater detail alongside examples drawn from specific SDGs. In the final section, the ecosystem will be revisited in full to present how ICT can be leveraged.

II. THE ICT ECOSYSTEM AS A FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As this section will explain, an interoperable, seamless ICT ecosystem is crucial to help populations reap the benefits of ICT and further development opportunity. For example, SDG 1 “end poverty in all its forms everywhere”, calls for all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable to have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance by 2030.⁵ With the widespread availability and use of mobile phones, many now have the opportunity to reach this goal.⁶

A mobile phone based platform for money transfer and financial services is able to give marginalised and remote communities access to a range of services, including money deposit and withdrawal, remittance delivery, bill payment, microcredit provision, which may be the foundation to the creation of local businesses. Money can be transferred via a menu on a phone and sent from one place to another more quickly, safely and easily than taking cash in person.

This is particularly useful in countries where many workers in cities send money back home to their families in rural communities.⁷



5 Target 1.4 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabledevelopmentgoals>

6 <http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2013/05/economist-explains-18>

7 <http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2013/05/economist-explains-18>

To help understand how such an initiative is supported by a strong ICT ecosystem, the following layers should be considered:

Central to this example is an **infrastructure** that is accessible and affordable for all. In this case, people need to be able to afford a mobile phone, to have access to a mobile network, to afford the network access fees as well as the utilities to charge the phone.

Built on top of the infrastructure are the appropriate **applications and services**, which in this case is a financial application that can be used on the mobile. Depending on the financial application, it may be necessary to access other services in the cloud⁸ to communicate with a financial or other institution for money deposit and transfer.

A key part of this example is the ability for the user to actively and independently use the device and understand the application's features. This can be done by reading or calculating information transmitted. User digital skills and literacy are therefore important and the ICT ecosystem as described underscores the need for developing both supply and demand side of connectivity issues. **User engagement** is crucial for the infrastructure and application to be meaningfully applied.

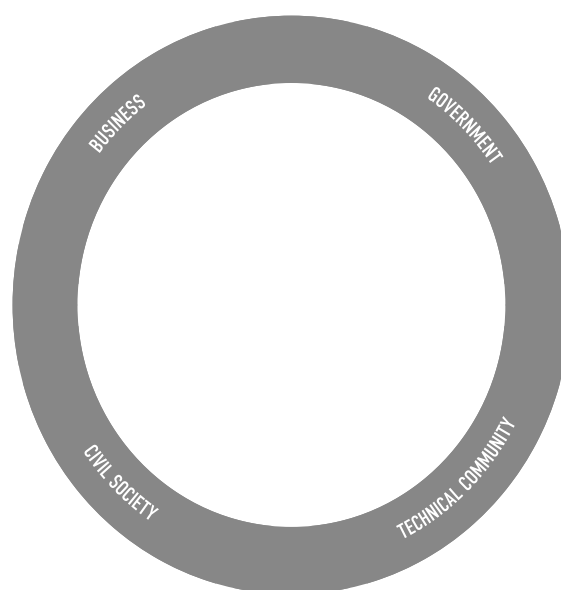
These mutually reinforcing layers as articulated in the diagram are important for basic functioning and the ability of the user to reap the potential benefits of the ICT application.

III. MULTISTAKEHOLDER APPROACHES FOR WELL-INFORMED AND PURPOSEFUL POLICYMAKING

By encouraging the participation of all relevant stakeholders in policy-making processes, governments can generate policies that are timely, scalable, and innovation enabling.

As this paper will illustrate, stakeholders play key roles in ensuring well-informed and targeted policy approaches. For example, SDG 5 “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”, calls for enhanced use of enabling technology, in particular ICT, to promote the empowerment of women.⁹ Women make up more than 50% of the world's population, but represent a staggering 70% of the world's poor¹⁰. At the same time, when a woman receives US \$1, she invests around 80% of this amount in her family. Advancing women's equality can add US\$12 trillion to annual 2025 GDP and if women play an identical role in labour markets to men, US\$28 trillion could be added to global annual GDP by 2025.¹¹

Access to ICT can impact gender equality by allowing women to participate more easily in the labour market. ICT can provide women with tools to feel more secure alone, access education and financial means or basic healthcare information.¹²



8 [ICC policy primer on Internet of everything \(2016\)](#)

9 Target 5.b <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabledevelopmentgoals>

10 <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/introduction-to-the-challenges-of-achieving-gender/>

11 <http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>

12 <https://www.w4.org/en/icts-and-mobile-technologies-empowering-women/>

However, these benefits are dependent on women having meaningful access to ICT, which can be facilitated or prevented by affordability, relevant content, skills and security to name a few examples. Women are currently less likely than men to use or own digital technologies and gaps are larger among youth and those over 45 years old.¹³ For countries to enhance the use of enabling technology for women they need to be well-informed about the barriers to access and how these challenges can be overcome.

The private sector plays a pivotal role in deploying Internet related infrastructure and delivering a wide range of ICT services. Business also contributes to encouraging access through capacity-building and education initiatives, promoting innovation, public-private research and development partnerships, where businesses work with other stakeholders.

Business is investing in extensive community oriented training to enhance women's use of enabling technology. By partnering with local nonprofits, programmes equip women with digital devices and provide training so that they can teach their neighbours and women in nearby villages on how to find relevant content, and how to make the most of these tools. Private sector initiatives are also reinforcing the importance of partnerships and inclusive approaches as many programmes encourage an entire lifetime attitude to training and awareness raising for women of all ages.¹⁴ Business often collaborates with local communities, governments, as well as global organizations and has considerable knowledge and expertise in addressing gender access.¹⁵

Civil society and the technical community are also important to consult to ensure well-informed policy approaches. For example, civil society can advise on societal and cultural factors within social groups that may impact women's access and use of ICT. Groups are able to collect data and raise awareness on issues that create barriers for women.¹⁶

The technical community lends its expertise by advising on technical capabilities of infrastructure and technology. This expertise is invaluable in considering how these can be used or how technological innovation might mitigate the socio-economic and political issues identified. For example, the technical community can work to gather data on gender gap and develop insights that can help drive evidence-based policy-making to overcome challenges.¹⁷

A good example of how and where stakeholders can collaborate and share knowledge on a global scale is through the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). The IGF provides a unique opportunity because it is set up where stakeholders meet on an equal footing and share best practices and policy options on a range of subjects pertaining to the Internet. An IGF main session about sustainable development, Internet and inclusive growth gathered participants from developing countries, business, technical community and civil society to provide an overview of how to make the Internet meaningful and empowering for disadvantaged groups such as women.¹⁸ An IGF workshop on an Internet of Women by 2020 provided useful considerations for policy options to address barriers women face to being empowered through ICT.¹⁹ The IGF provides an opportunity for those policymakers who wish to benefit from diverse sources of knowledge, generate policy options from the experience and expertise of relevant stakeholders, which can then be translated into local action. The IGF provides capacity-building and information sharing on a range of ICT policy issues including connectivity, data protection, and emerging technology.²⁰

13 <http://www.vitainternational.media/en/article/2016/01/20/digital-divide-is-it-really-crucial-to-narrow-the-gap-between-rich-and/165/>

14 <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/DigitalLiteracy/casestudies.aspx>

15 <https://www.telefonica.com/en/web/public-policy/blog/article/-/blogs/ict-and-social-innovation-the-m-inclusion-project>

17 <https://www.internetsociety.org/tags/women-and-ict>

18 <http://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2016-day-2-main-hall-sustainable-development-internet-and-inclusive-growth>

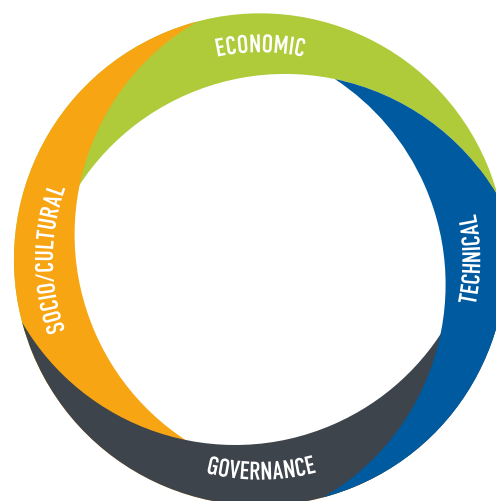
19 <http://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2016-day-1-room-1-ws15-an-internet-of-women-by-2020-wsis-vision-into-reality>

20 <https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/thematic-work>

IV. EFFECTIVE POLICY APPROACHES TO SUPPORT AN ENABLING POLICY ENVIRONMENT

With all relevant stakeholders consulted, governments will be better equipped to ensure an enabling policy environment. The policy considerations surrounding ICT can take the form of economic, social/cultural, technical and governance issues that are interlinked and cross-cutting.

The recommendations below provide examples of the types of policies that can help support an enabling environment for ICT.



Economic policy considerations

Investment

In the last two decades, the private sector has played an important role in deploying Internet related infrastructure and delivering a wide range of ICT services. Going forward, private sector investment in infrastructure deployment in access, connectivity and innovation will need to increase even more rapidly. Ensuring public policies that promote rather than deter investment in next generation broadband technologies to enable new bandwidth intensive and quality sensitive applications and services is important. Similarly, investment in high speed networks and ICT services can create a platform for economic growth, job creation, and greater competitiveness. To seize the opportunities presented by the increased use of ICT and the Internet, policymakers should promote market entry and investments, and aim at attaining greater geographic coverage of networks.

Data protection

Governments should adopt policies to build trust by ensuring that users have practical mechanisms and appropriate control over how personal data is used. Companies should adopt recognised and applicable best practices to ensure that personal data is appropriately secured as technology and services evolve. Governments should recognize that an accountability approach that drives self-regulation efforts may be both a more flexible and effective method of achieving data protection than government regulation. The most productive approach to ensuring robust privacy and security standards is voluntary compliance with broadly accepted industry guidelines.²¹

Cross border data flows

Governments should ensure all citizens and companies can realize the full potential of the Internet as a platform for innovation and economic growth, by adopting policies that facilitate the adoption of new technologies and the global movement of data that supports them. Establishing clear rules and enforcing roles and responsibilities in the data processing value chain are the keys to maintaining responsibility over compliance irrespective of locality. Certain compelling public policy issues, including privacy and security, are recognized as possible exceptions and may form a legitimate basis for governments to place some limits on data flows if they are implemented in a manner that is nondiscriminatory, is not arbitrary, is least trade restrictive, and not otherwise a disguised restriction on trade.²²

Social/cultural policy considerations

ICT skills

For populations to be able to use ICT in a meaningful way, governments should encourage the development of literacy skills and training in ICT and related subjects to harness the local development opportunities ICT brings.

²¹ [ICC policy primer on Internet of everything \(2016\)](#)

²² [ICC policy statement on Trade in the Digital Economy: A primer on cross border data flows \(2016\)](#)

Access for disadvantaged groups

Particular attention should be given to developing tools, products and services that promote access for the elderly and those with disabilities. Protecting women's rights to freedom from discrimination and exclusion and supporting their rights to political, economic, cultural and social participation is also important.

Locally relevant content, resources and tools

Policies are necessary to continue the support of capacity-building initiatives that seek to empower individuals and businesses locally to become content producers and develop business models that are unique and relevant to national economies. Policies that promote the creation of locally relevant content should be encouraged. Such policies should be market-driven and based on voluntary commercial arrangements.

Technical policy considerations

Infrastructure

While framing ICT policies, governments must take into consideration that at the end of 2016, 3.9 billion persons, 53% of the world's population, were still not using the Internet. In the Americas and Commonwealth of Independent States regions about a third of the population is still to get online. According to the International Telecommunications Union, 58.1% of people in Asia and the Pacific region, 58.4 % in Arab States and 75% in Africa are yet to connect to the Internet. In contrast, 79% of Europeans have access to Internet.²³ Internet penetration rates are higher for men than women universally across all continents. To ensure the full potential of ICT investment in broadband infrastructure, access technologies, wireless devices and other related aspects of the ICT ecosystem still need to be incentivised.

Spectrum allocation

Availability of spectrum, for shared and exclusive, licensed and unlicensed use, has a critical role in promoting the accessibility of the Internet and thus its developmental prospects. There are considerable economic benefits of taking action to ensure that sufficient spectrum is available to support the increasing demands following current and expected data traffic trends. There are many important uses of spectrum, including broadcast and mobile broadband as well as for Wi-Fi. Effective and technologically neutral management of this increasingly scarce resource must be a priority for policy-makers while ensuring the integrity of services offered by existing spectrum license holders.²⁴

Governance policy considerations

Interoperability

Lack of interoperability across the policy and regulatory environment can create needless administrative burdens and compliance inconsistencies across jurisdictions, stifling the opportunities and progress that can be made. The adoption of existing principles such as the principles set forth in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Privacy Guidelines²⁵, and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Privacy Framework Principles²⁶ ensure adequate data protection and consistent approaches between countries. The APEC Digital Prosperity Checklist²⁷ is a useful tool to develop principle based and outcome driven policies.

²³ <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/ICTFactsFigures2016.pdf>

²⁴ [ICC Discussion paper on Approaching shortages of mobile broadband spectrum threaten to limit broadband deployment and economic growth \(2011\)](#)

²⁵ <https://www.oecd.org/sti/ieconomy/privacy-guidelines.htm>

²⁶ http://www.apec.org/Groups/Committee-on-Trade-and-Investment/-/media/Files/Groups/ECSG/05_ecsg_privacyframewk.ashx

²⁷ http://www.apec.org/-/media/Files/Groups/TEL/APEC_Digital_Prosperty_Checklist.doc

Public-private partnerships

Public-private partnerships are important to leverage existing industry standards and investments. This will help utilize both public and private resources to facilitate the research, leadership, and governance to advance the use of ICT for sustainable development.

Institutional capacity and cooperation

Capacity-building remains critical to ensuring that institutions throughout the world are better able to collaborate to address developmental issues and share information. Greater efforts could be made through appropriate regional and global entities, such as the IGF, to help gather knowledge for capacity-building.

V. LEVERAGING ICT TO MEET THE SDGS

This policy statement has outlined the components required to leverage ICT for sustainable economic development: a foundational ICT ecosystem, the consultation of relevant stakeholders and examples of the types of economic, technical, social/cultural and governance policies that can help create an enabling environment for ICT.



The examples below are offered to provide a picture of where ICT serves to facilitate the advancement of the SDGs.²⁸

SDG 1 End poverty in all its forms everywhere



ICT offers the potential to create new services, share information that enhances economic, health and educational opportunity and give a voice to traditionally under-represented constituencies.²⁹ Remote sensors and satellite based ICT has enabled improvements in meteorology and epidemiology that can help reduce the vulnerability of marginalized communities.³⁰

Digital technologies also create new business models by accelerating the shift to a service economy, and challenge classic distinctions between goods and services by making them more integrated, especially with the intensified trend of “servicification.” The services sector has a key social function in sustainable development by directly providing access to basic services such as education, electricity, financial, telecommunication, transport and water services.

SDG 2 End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture



Emerging technologies such as big data³¹ and Internet of things²⁹ create new possibilities for agriculture and food security. Precision farming can be supported by information sent to mobile phones that can provide farmers with weather reports, crop prices and new farming techniques. Big data analytics can use data generated from global positioning systems and sensors on fields and farming equipment to improve farmers' activities spanning from crop yields to water utilization. Analytics and software solutions can also be used for crop

management. Satellite imagery can provide decision support to farmers to help ensure crop health.³³ Remote monitoring systems are being used in smart research stations in developing countries to monitor environmental parameters, automatically managing data collection and storage, and transmitting information to the cloud. Smart research stations provide farmers with information to enhance sustainability and the commercial viability of important elements in the crop sector value chain. This involves coupling real-time measurement of environmental factors with scientific observations and manual data collection from trees equipped with near field communication tags. Globally, more than 500 million smallholder farms in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa produce about 80% of the food consumed in these regions today.

Trade regulations and standards as well as retailers and their consumers are requiring increasing levels of transparency, and that the production of food and other products be documented and controlled for quality at each and every step.

With cloud based mobile solutions, it becomes possible to track produce from farms to factories and connect smallholder farmers and suppliers in rural areas. This enhanced connectivity contributes to improving trade and ensuring food and nutrition coverage. All parties benefit from advanced forecasting and planning and from full traceability back to the farm.³⁴

28 Examples focus on the goals in focus for 2017 at the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development taking place 10-19 July 2017. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

29 <https://www.oecd.org/dac/35284979.pdf>

30 <http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/UNPAN94615.pdf>

31 [ICC policy primer on Internet of everything \(2016\)](#)

32 [ICC policy primer on Internet of everything \(2016\)](#)

33 http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/ecn162016d3_en.pdf p.5

34 http://global.sap.com/campaigns/2016_01_unglobalgoals/2_Zero_Hunger.html

SDG 3 Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages



Technology solutions in developing countries are enabling quality and affordable healthcare. Computer systems are being used to give doctors in rural hospitals warnings if drugs expire, automatically requesting providers to dispose of those drugs immediately. Systems can also track stock and expiry dates through a simple interface accessible from a personal computer. When supplies run low, an alert is launched to make sure more medicine is ordered. This type of ICT solution raises medical quality, which can be one of the most common problems with

healthcare providers in low income countries that do not have the equipment necessary to provide medical care. Clinics can also use mobile broadband, so that the system is portable. Staff can send a text message to patients to make sure they take medication or to tell groups of patients that a specialist is visiting. Computers and the Internet can also be used to help local healthcare professionals consult urban experts and share medical records. Doctors can use printers, scanners, and digital cameras to generate and send information to specialists abroad or in capital cities. This saves time and also saves the patient having to travel. ICT can also be used when reliable electricity supply is problematic in rural areas, and supply energy to hospitals. Solar powered shipping containers can be fitted out as cyber cafes.³⁵

ICT can also assist access to healthcare technology for people in isolated areas. For instance, medical advice to women in rural areas is provided, on a confidential basis, by text message or vocal messaging. Mobile based health programmes can also contribute to preventing diseases and fight against child and infant mortality, helping healthcare specialists gather data for community centre management.³⁶

SDG 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



ICT can be leveraged to support sustainable development by not only improving efficiency, enhancing cooperation and disseminating information, but also by impacting social interactions in more ways than was previously possible. As a first and general comment, access to a mobile phone can mean women feel safer and are able to leave the house alone knowing that a mode of contact to family is not far away. Mobile phones can also provide access to information on health, education and finance.³⁷

The application of innovative technology in cities can be used to ensure gender inclusive infrastructure design. It can provide platforms for city planners to engage and interact with women in cities to understand their needs. It can also help better analyse problems faced by women in cities, using real-time data. For example, a smart city application may be designed to continuously collect and monitor gender disaggregated data which can be used to better understand and respond to the needs of women. This can lead to public policy decisions which consider women's needs, helping empower them in their local communities.³⁸

ICT can also help develop and enhance the socio-economic role of women in society when they run businesses and use digital resources to sell their products online, generating visibility for local products and recognition for themselves.

35 https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/Innovative_e%E2%80%91Healthb_Solutions_in_Africa_Award.pdf

36 <http://www.designindaba.com/articles/creative-work/mobile-phones-hold-solution-infant-mortality-cameroon>

37 <https://www.w4.org/en/icts-and-mobile-technologies-empowering-women/>

38 http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/ecn162016d2_en.pdf_p.14

SDG 9 Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation



ICT is an enabler and accelerator for the development of SDGs in local economies by fostering the emergence of new value added models through policies of innovation and entrepreneurship. The development of incubators which support the emergence of start-ups and new technologies can develop innovative services and contribute to local social and economic development.

The use of the Internet can expand the market for innovative products and services and support the growth of small-and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from developing countries in global markets. Electronic commerce platforms can create opportunities for transactions that would not otherwise occur or that would not be profitable in the marketplace. The Internet can extend the geographic reach of the market and provide opportunities for transactions that could not have occurred without its existence.³⁹

ICT access can improve information management and sharing and facilitate collaboration between and with third parties, including suppliers, consumers and research organizations, universities, employees through networking sites and collaborative tools, such as electronic conferencing tools and discussion forums and wikis. The use of participative networks can allow outreach to customers and academics to help orient innovation efforts and improve their work. Furthermore, ICT and broadband networks allow SMEs and institutions to participate in larger research networks, which may encourage them to increase their research and development activities.

ICT can also facilitate knowledge diffusion and result in further development of innovations. ICT access and broadband enabled trade in services allow companies to get access to less expensive inputs and services by reaching global markets. These services create new opportunities for business efficiency. For example, cloud computing allows firms to adopt a pay as you go model for computing resources instead of making significant up front investments in ICT infrastructure or software.⁴⁰

SDG 14 Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development



ICT can play a significant role in the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans through improved monitoring and reporting which leads to increased accountability. Satellite based monitoring delivers timely and accurate data, while local sensors deliver on-the-spot updates in real time. Big data analytics can also be used to analyse short and long term trends in terms of biodiversity, pollution, weather patterns and ecosystem evolution, and to plan mitigation activities.

Mobile devices can empower local communities to preserve oceans and marine life through mobile broadband enabled devices that help individuals access information concerning the oceans, and to take an active role in discussing environmental issues and monitoring adherence to conservation targets.⁴¹ For example, combining satellite data with the individual call signs of fishing vessels allows monitoring of compliance to open or restrict fishing grounds. Protection of whales can also be ensured through systems installed on ships to enable location of whales and other maritime mammals, share their positions and prevent collisions.⁴²

³⁹ <https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/content/icts>

⁴⁰ <https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/content/icts>

⁴¹ <http://www.itu.int/en/sustainable-world/Pages/goal14.aspx>

⁴² <http://www.who.edu/page.do?pid=126458&tid=3622&cid=57146>

SDG 17 Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development



ICT is important for supporting global partnerships as it improves efficiency, enhances coordination and improves the quality of information gathered, shared and analysed. ICT is transforming the relationships between citizens and governments through digitalisation of public services and increasing opportunities for public participation in decision-making. For example, big data analytics can help improve governments' and citizens' understanding of society and enable evidence based development planning.⁴³


CONCLUSION

The international community is moving forward in pursuit of the goals outlined in the 2030 development agenda. To successfully leverage ICT for development, policy approaches must reflect and remain consistent with the mutually supporting layers of the ICT ecosystem and engage relevant stakeholders throughout the policy-making process. ICC remains available to work with policymakers as they continue to define practical, optimally effective policies to reap the full benefits of ICT for sustainable economic development.

⁴³ http://www.unglobalpulse.org/sites/default/files/Primer%202013_FINAL%20FOR%20PRINT.pdf



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