

All countries should benefit from fast-moving ICT revolution, urges UN agency

15 November 2017 – Revolutionary advances in technology have the potential to “fundamentally transform” billions of lives, but the threat that many people – especially in the world’s poorer countries – could be left out continues to loom large, a new United Nations report warns.

“Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have the [potential to make the world a better place](#) and contribute immensely to sustainable development,” said Houlin Zhao, Secretary-General of the UN International Telecommunication Union – the Organization’s specialized agency for matters related to ICT.

“However, despite the overall progress achieved, the digital divide remains a challenge which needs to be addressed,” he stressed.

According to the UN agency’s 2017 [Measuring the Information Society](#) report, harnessing the benefits of advances in the ‘Internet of Things’, big data, cloud computing and artificial intelligence, countries will need to create conditions and infrastructures that allow these next-generation networks and services.

At the same time, the substantial digital divides between countries and regions will also need to be addressed.

[The ICT] revolution will unfold over the coming decades with opportunities, challenges, and implications that are not yet fully knownITU report

For instance, least developed countries – which have, over the years, made progress in improving ICT infrastructure and connectivity – continue to lag behind on key indicators that can influence their position in the digital economy, such as having the lowest numbers among internet users (15.2 per cent on average).

Countries, irrespective of their development classification, will also have to adopt policies that that harbour innovation, as well as those that mitigate risks to information security, privacy and employment.

“This report will help to support countries to do just that,” expressed Mr. Zhao.

The report employs the ICT Development Index 2017, a unique benchmark of the level of ICT development in countries across the world.

This year, Iceland (score: 8.98) tops the rankings, followed by Republic of Korea (8.80) and Switzerland (8.66). United States, with a score of 8.18, ranks 16. However, the best performing African country, the island nation of Mauritius ranked 75, with a score of 5.88.

Measuring the Information Society, ITU's flagship publication is recognized as the most authoritative repository of data and analysis on the state of global ICT development. It is extensively relied upon by governments, international organizations, development banks and private sector analysts and investors worldwide.