

Anusha Rahman Khan

Pakistan

Candidate
for the post of
**Director of the
ITU Telecommunication
Development Bureau**

What is your view on the role of digital technologies in a rapidly changing world?

For so many of the problems and divides befalling our rapidly changing world, the solutions lie in collectively and systematically approaching socio-economic transformation through the innovative application of technologies. Even for legacy issues such as poverty, socio-economic development, inclusion, and cohesion across communities, solutions have often come through the adoption of evolving digital technologies.

A recent example is COVID-19 crisis management – from rapid vaccine discoveries to effective communication and dissemination of knowledge, information, and awareness.

Digitization is the core need of our rapidly changing world. It needs to be embraced holistically, both to catalyse delivery on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to effectively address 21st-century challenges, including climate change and natural calamities. Digital technologies have emerged as a key contributor to save lives and serve the vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Early innovation and entrepreneurial adoption are essential to make sure today's emerging digital technologies support the globally inclusive betterment of humanity.



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How should the work of ITU's Telecommunication Development Sector evolve to maintain relevance in today's world?

Rapidly evolving technologies, along with local and global markets, business models and service delivery mechanisms, call for a transformational change in the legacy structure, functioning and leadership of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT).

The challenges of rapid global telecommunications development must be addressed holistically across the state-industry-development-finance nexus. BDT needs to promote stable cross-industry and cross-stakeholder partnerships, under the policy oversight of governments, to bring about inclusive benefits in the knowledge and information society.

This can only happen through a dynamic and non-stereotypical role, whereby the Bureau truly implements ITU engagement through tangible multi-stakeholder frameworks. BDT needs leadership with passion, commitment, extensive government and industry experience, courage and, very importantly, empathy for humanity.

If elected, what are your top three priorities and how do you plan to achieve them?

The capability to bring together coalitions and partnerships between a diverse range of inter-agency, government, social, development, finance, and industry stakeholders is vital for the vibrancy of BDT and beneficial for ITU stakeholders. I would combine a firm belief in consensus-building and collaboration with a substantial focus will be on equipping BDT with the best capacity to serve in an efficient, diligent, and transparent manner.

My aim – what I call my “4C strategy” for BDT – consists of:

1. **Consensus building** among industry-government stakeholders to achieve the highest measurable impact and promote standardized programmes to transform education, health, energy, agriculture, environment, entrepreneurship, skills development, employment and financial inclusion.
2. **Coalition building** among public-private sector stakeholders, including the telecoms industry, global technology platforms, finance sectors, etc., catering to the unique needs of various regions, and focusing on least-developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS), to ensure sound implementation and measurable results.
3. **Collaboration** with governments and partner-agencies through trackable platforms to implement agile programmes at the scale needed to create measurable, transformational impact.
4. **Closure** of deals with partners and governments to step up collaboration and implement initiatives without stretching BDT resources.

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How can the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector contribute to progress on the UN Sustainable Development Goals?

As Minister and member of the ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, I was part of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), World Trade Organization (WTO) and other UN agency streams working towards the SDGs.

I believe now is the time to take the “*Meaningful connectivity*” slogan of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) to the next level of achievement through transnational, trans-industry partnerships. In my view, meaningful connectivity means meaningful transformation and meaningful opportunities for the betterment of human lives – in all the spheres of socio-economic uplift defined by the SDGs.

Despite the non-inclusion of specific information and communication technology (ICT) goals in the SDGs, the quickest way to help nations achieve continues to be through a transformation across governance and public service delivery. This needs to happen across health, education, agriculture, finance, gender equity, and all other areas. The role of technologies and connectivity in disaster response and addressing natural calamities has already proven paramount in the face of climate change and COVID-19.

So, need for technologies to achieve SDG targets across the globe is an irrefutable reality. One possible role for BDT would be to help standardize a measurement mechanism for the achievement of such goals.

Tell us about your achievements in leadership and building consensus.

With my academic and professional credentials, and through unrelenting team efforts, an immense amount of impactful work has got done. As chairperson of the Universal Service Fund (USF), the Pakistan Software Expert Board (PSEB), Ignite Telecom, and other companies, I have led teams that effectively delivered on challenging goals.

My bedrock principle throughout has been leadership and consensus building. Many achievements were a direct result of cross-stakeholder consensus:

- **Legislative:** Pakistan’s first Cyber Crime Law (PECA, 2016) and initiating cybersecurity policy.
- **Policy:** Introduction of 3G/4G, 2014 GSMA “**Spectrum for Mobile Broadband Award**”.
- Telecommunications Policy, 2015; GSMA “**Government Leadership Award**”.

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- **ICT development:** Broadband for Sustainable Development Programme through USF- driven public-private partnerships.
- **IT industry development:** Digital Pakistan Policy, and policy-driven export growth 151 per cent at compound annual growth rate of 20 per cent.
- **Gender:** “ICT for Girls” Programme; ITU/UN Women “**GEM-TECH Global Achiever**” Award.
- **Entrepreneurship and innovation:** Ecosystem and Network of Technology incubators (NIC) across Pakistan within two-years.
- **“Digiskills”:** Online skill-based training programme.
- **International:** As Minister/UN Broadband Commissioner, led international platforms including ITU, CTO, WSIS, UNCTAD, UNESCO, WEF, etc.

◆ ***What else would you bring to the table as the next Director of ITU’s Telecommunication Development Bureau?***

To meaningfully and measurably “advance” the objectives of BDT requires a diverse leadership team equipped with holistic competencies, including policymaking, regulation, resilience, thought leadership, empathy, and commitment to socio-political and development matters with a particular focus on economic and commercial viability.

With a unique mix of global experience in industry, legal practice, and legislature; in serving around 220 million people as Pakistan’s Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication; and with major cross-cutting achievements recognized both nationally and internationally, I believe I can provide the next-generation leadership that BDT needs.

My professional, political, and personal profile equips me for the leadership and consensus building required to push through global development frameworks and initiatives.

◆ ***Is there anything else you would like to add?***

Shaping ITU for the future – to keep serving humanity and accelerate the achievement of the SDGs – will depend on involving professionals with hands-on experience of industry, government leadership, partnerships and collaboration.

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