

Stephen Bereaux

Bahamas

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?

The role of digital technologies in achieving sustainable development is now widely accepted globally, as evidenced by the prominence of “digital” in the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda and in almost every country’s national development strategy.

Digital technologies increase the potential for accessing education, health care, and economic and social opportunities, regardless of a person’s location, economic means, social status, gender, disabilities, or any number of limiting factors. Everyone, everywhere must now be able, should they choose, to access and use digital technologies. Digital technologies also provide new and exciting ways to tackle some of the world’s greatest challenges, such as natural hazards and harm to our environment.

In our quest to advance the sustainable development agenda, we must be mindful that bad actors can exploit digital technologies to cause harm. Unequal digital development and adoption also have the potential to intensify existing divides and create new ones.



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

The ITU Development Sector (ITU-D) was created 30 years ago to bring everyone within easy reach of a telephone. While we have advanced since then from the telephone to digital technologies, ITU's and even ITU-D's work in many ways continues to approach technology in isolation from broader socio-economic issues.

Our direct assistance and services to ITU Member States remain disparate and do not always reflect the importance of simultaneously transforming infrastructure, systems, processes, and people in achieving safe, equitable and inclusive digital societies and economies.

ITU-D must make certain that the whole world keeps pace, and that the benefits of a digital society flow to all. In addition to being a thought leader, our products and services must be tailored for the specific needs of our Member States and must embrace the full scope of societal change that's needed for digital transformation to have global, long-lasting effects.

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

My top priority will be to redouble our efforts to help Member States collectively **connect the 2.7 billion still unconnected**. Building on our connectivity products and initiatives, the Partner2Connect initiative provides a framework to bring together the additional resources needed and to leverage the work being done by others to address the connectivity gap.

Secondly, I will reorganize our work to **advance the whole concept of digital transformation**. The new World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) resolution on digital transformation gives us a clear mandate to engage in this work. Our recently developed Digital Transformation Wheel establishes the implementation framework, letting us assess membership needs and deliver targeted, relevant, and effective interventions that enable and accelerate the creation of safe, equitable and inclusive digital societies and economies.

My third priority will be to **foster organizational excellence** in the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) by building the right team, with the right skills, supported by the right organizational culture. I will focus on creating an environment within BDT that values the highest levels of performance, and where staff are accountable to each other and our membership. I will bring BDT closer to Member States by focusing on and expanding ITU's regional presence while ensuring that it embodies OneITU.

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

Safe, equitable and inclusive digital transformation of our societies and economies is fundamental to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

ITU, led by BDT, participates in the UN Development Framework, and ITU is a key partner in the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation. However, the most impactful efforts are done in developing countries, coordinated by ITU's regional offices in partnership with UN resident coordinators. Shifting to a stronger regional presence is the most essential step for fulfilling our role within the UN development system. Only then will ITU have the critical mass needed to contribute meaningfully to achieving the SDGs.

Tell us about your achievements in leadership and building consensus.

Over the past 20 years, I have developed a reputation for transformational leadership, trusted consensus building, and insightful compromise.

As a regulator, I have been involved at a management level in the building of two information and communication technology (ICT) regulatory agencies from "start-ups". I was the chief regulator in The Bahamas when it successfully liberalized its mobile sector in one of the fastest effective implementations of mobile competition globally.

As a delegate to ITU from The Bahamas, I successfully chaired Committee 5 of the 2018 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, addressing women's participation, cooperation with Interpol, and other key recommendations. Together with the Caribbean Telecommunications Union, I also coordinated a pan-Caribbean-wide approach to the region's representation at ITU and the regional telecommunication organization CITEL.

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In the past two and a half years, I led the ITU team for a successful World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC), including being responsible for the delicate bilateral and multilateral negotiations surrounding the conference's postponement due to COVID-19 and its relocation to Rwanda. As Secretary to the Plenary, I also coordinated WTDC's work through leadership of the conference secretariat.

During my time at ITU, I was also responsible for the review of ITU's regional presence and implementing the resulting recommendations for strengthening ITU's regional and area offices.

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

My career has exposed me to a mix of organizational leadership, ICT policy and regulatory decision-making, international consensus-building, and corporate governance. This skill set is tailor-made for the challenges we face in increasing BDT's relevance to Member States. As a national of and former regulator in two Caribbean states, I understand the issues faced by developing countries and more specifically by small island developing states (SIDS).

Is there anything else you would like to add?

The BDT Director is the chief executive of the Bureau responsible for ITU-D. Member States should choose the candidate they believe is best able to effectively motivate and mobilize BDT's team and resources to further digital development globally.

The last four years have seen a resurgence in BDT engagement. This has occurred in the face of a global pandemic and has been achieved due to a complete shift in the thinking about, and in the approach to, how BDT is managed. The continuance of those reforms is in the best interest of all ITU's Member States in all regions.



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