



ACCELERATING THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE ISTANBUL
PROGRAMME OF
ACTION FOR AFRICAN
LEAST DEVELOPED
COUNTRIES
A FOCUS ON BROADBAND



Africa's poorest countries call for greater investment in broadband infrastructure and technology

Press Release

Dakar, 28 February 2017 – Sustainable development in Africa's poorest countries stands to greatly benefit from investment in broadband infrastructure, according to Representatives from Africa's Least Developed Countries meeting in Dakar, Senegal today.

The two day meeting, co-organised by the Government of Senegal and UN-OHRLLS, brings together representatives from governments, civil society, the private sector and senior UN officials, providing an opportunity for participants to share lessons learned on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Successes and challenges will be considered at the event which will also assess progress towards meeting international commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries (IPOA).

“In an interconnected world, information and communication technologies are key to allow individuals and businesses to participate in the knowledge economy,” said Gyan Chandra Acharya, United Nations Under-Secretary General and High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. “From achieving food security, eliminating poverty, preventing losses due to disasters, empowering women and girls to inclusive and sustainable economic growth, broadband access is a truly cross-cutting issue that is vital for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the least developed countries.”

The meeting will focus on broadband technology and how least developed countries in Africa can leverage investments in broadband to achieve sustainable development and accelerate implementation of the IPOA. Case studies on broadband initiatives in African least developed countries will also inform discussions.

“Digital is an opportunity for Africa. Digital transformation is the chance that African countries in general, and African LDCs in particular, need to fully tap into.” said Mr Birima Mangara, Minister in charge of Budget for Senegal.

No other group of countries stands to gain more from ICT than the world's least developed countries, many of which have worked hard to harness the benefits offered by increased usage of technology. Given the importance of broadband connectivity for these nations, many least developed countries have made progress in improving access to internet and mobile telephony although average access levels still remain low.

Only 11.1% of households in the least developed countries had access to broadband in 2015, compared to the world average of 52.3% or other developing countries at 41.1%. Affordability is a critical factor affecting broadband internet access in the world's poorest countries, many of these nations have expensive services of varying quality and face high operational costs.

There are 48 least developed countries, 32 of which are in Africa. Least Developed Countries are at the bottom of the development ladder, with very low human development, low income and

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economic growth and high degree of vulnerability. As such they remain at the centre of global development challenges.

In May 2011, the global community adopted the IPOA to be implemented by 2020. The main objective of the IPOA is to overcome the structural challenges faced by least developed countries in order to eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals and enable graduation from the least developed country category.

UN-OHRLLS has advocated strongly on the importance of broadband access for the least developed countries as a critical element for achieving the IPOA and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The office has also encouraged the coherence of UN system support together with international financial institutions and the Under Secretary General sits on the Broadband Commission to enhance support for least developed countries in the ICT sector.

Outcomes of the meeting are planned to contribute to broader discussions on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals during the High Level Political Forum in New York.

Media contact:

Louise Stoddard – stoddard@un.org

Further information: unohrlls.org/event/lcds-regional-meeting-senegal/