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UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE  
LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING  
COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES



## **Achieving sustainable development through enhanced broadband connectivity in Asia-Pacific least developed countries**

### **Press Release**

PORT VILA, 26 October 2017 – Representatives from the Asia-Pacific least developed countries (LDCs) are meeting today in Vanuatu to share best practices and lessons learned on their respective efforts in implementing broadband connectivity and information and communication technologies. The two day meeting is being convened by the Government of Vanuatu and the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS).

In recognising the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships to achieve broadband connectivity, the meeting brings together LDCs, private sector, development partners, multi-lateral institutions and academics to discuss effective solutions to close the digital divide many of these countries face. The discussions are also expected to draw linkages with national, regional and global efforts to implement the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (IPoA), the SAMOA Pathway for Small Island Developing States and the Sustainable Development Goals.

“If these countries are to end extreme poverty, tackle hunger, improve health and education, build resilient infrastructure, create livelihoods and address major challenges like climate change, broadband connectivity and ICTs are critically important to achieve the sustainable development aspirations of LDCs,” said Ms. Fekitamoeloa ‘Utoikamanu, High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

“As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, there should be no reason for the Least Developed Countries to be left behind. If we are to successfully plug the digital divide, partnerships will be critical to accelerate our progress in fully participating in the global knowledge economy,” said Hon. Leignkone Tao Bruno, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Globally, 3.9 billion people, constituting more than half the world’s total population, are still offline and a significant proportion of these people live in LDCs. While progress is being made in improving access to internet and mobile telephony, for the most part access remains low in this group of countries. Broadband penetration in

the LDCs is much lower relative to other developing countries and especially low compared to developed countries. In 2016, the percentage of fixed and mobile broadband subscriptions in LDCs represented only 0.8 per cent and 19.4 per cent, respectively. On the other hand, in developed countries, fixed and mobile broadband subscriptions were about 30.1 and 90.3 per cent, respectively.

Investing in broadband can lead to among others: employment creation in sectors that are likely to be using ICT in a transformative way such as finance, education and healthcare; increased innovation and productivity; disaster risk reduction and resilience building; and better governance. Therefore, investing in broadband would contribute towards meeting some of the IPoA priorities and Sustainable Development Goal 9.c. which calls for significantly increasing access to information and communications technology and providing universal and affordable access to the Internet in LDCs by 2020.

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