



## **High-speed internet shows great potential to boost livelihoods and improve economies in world's poorest nations**

### **Press release**

New York, 12 July 2018 – The world's least-developed countries are able to overcome the challenges of providing high-speed Internet connectivity to more communities, according to a new report released today. The report, focusing on four country case studies Cambodia, Rwanda, Senegal and Vanuatu, highlights the important benefits to economies and livelihoods that broadband internet offers, reviewing the national experiences in leveraging high-speed internet infrastructure to overcome vulnerabilities, grow economies and enhance livelihoods

The report was released by the Broadband Commission's Working Group on Vulnerable Countries, chaired by Ms. Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu, High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

"In the four case studies we see signs of progress yet also areas for further work. I hope that the recommendations here will help to unlock the myriad of potential benefits that broadband can bring to communities, so that we leave no one behind as we strive to connect the most vulnerable of countries." Said Ms. Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High-Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

Considerable progress is highlighted across the four countries, in expanding infrastructure and improving affordability of broadband. Advancements are outlined in Rwanda, where the country has built a 4G wireless broadband network that will cover 95% of the population by 2018. The report highlights how Senegal is using public private partnerships to achieve universal broadband access and Vanuatu is aiming to achieve 98% broadband coverage by 2018. Cambodia is highlighted as one of the countries with the cheapest mobile internet prices in the world.

Despite the progress, especially in text-based mobile phone applications, the report highlights that the use of broadband has not fully matched its growing supply, due to challenges such as weak digital literacy, unaffordability and lack of relevant local content and applications. The report highlights lessons from the countries, recommending that that digital training and awareness should be expanded. It also calls for more supportive legislation, better coordination among actors of the broadband industry, and improved monitoring and evaluation.

Cambodia, Rwanda, Senegal and Vanuatu make up four of the 47 least developed countries, nations which are at the bottom of the development ladder, with very low human development, low income and economic growth and high degree of vulnerability. As such

they remain at the centre of global development challenges. In 2017 only 15% of households in LDCs have Internet access at home. In these countries, many Internet users are accessing the Internet from work, schools and universities or from other shared public connections outside the home

In May 2011, the global community adopted the Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries to be implemented by 2020. The main objective of the IPOA is to overcome the structural challenges faced by least developed countries 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.

Further information: <http://unohrlls.org/event/broadband-national-development-four-ldcs/>

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