



INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
SATELLITE ORGANIZATION

# SYMPOSIUM CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

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TUESDAY JUNE 12 2018

WASHINGTON, D.C.

ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT THROUGH  
SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018, the first ITSO Symposium on Achieving Sustainable Development through Satellite Communications was held at American University Washington College of Law (AUWCL) in Washington, D.C. The Symposium was held right before the 38<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ITSO's Assembly of Parties.

The ITSO Symposium was divided into three sessions: i) Satellite Broadband, ii) Challenges and Initiatives, and iii) Applications and Projects. Each session had presentations made by representatives of international organizations, the private sector or the non-profit sector.

The ITSO Symposium concentrated on the importance of ICTs for sustainable development, and specifically focused on how satellite broadband can be used to address connectivity gaps and the role of new technologies in bridging the digital divide. The Symposium also covered challenges to universal connectivity such as access to infrastructure, affordability of services, relevant content, and lack of basic digital skills training. Best practices to combat the existing financial, policy, and regulatory constraints that prevent policy makers and private sector actors from breaking down those connectivity barriers were also discussed.

Finally, ongoing projects that leverage satellite technology for sustainable development such as the VideoKall Unmanned Micro Clinic and the ITSO-UCC-Intelsat pilot project to bring high speed data and voice to the Kibuku (Ntoroko) and Bufundi (Rubanda) communities of Uganda, were presented.



## HIGHLIGHTS

**35** COUNTRIES PRESENT

**69** ATTENDEES

TOP LEVEL EXECUTIVES

# INTRODUCTION

On June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018, the first ITSO Symposium on Achieving Sustainable Development through Satellite Communications was held at American University Washington College of Law (AUWCL) in Washington, D.C. The Symposium was held right before the 38<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ITSO's Assembly of Parties.

There were 69 people in attendance, including personnel from Ministries of ICT, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, CEO's of International Organizations and telecommunications regulatory agencies from ITSO's Member States as well as representatives from the private sector and students from AUWCL.

The 2018 ITSO Symposium demonstrated how satellite technology plays a key role universalizing broadband coverage and broadens the conversation on how to achieve our common goals through ICTs. It is increasingly evident that widespread access to information and communication technologies (ICTs), especially broadband, is necessary for sustainable development. Consequently, ICTs have been recognized as integral to the achievement of the SDGs. However, it is estimated that more than half of the world's population remains unconnected, and therefore cannot take advantage of vital opportunities and services available through ICT.

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## KEYNOTE SPEECH

The Keynote Address to the Symposium was delivered by ITSO's Director General, Mr. Patrick Masambu, on ICTs for Sustainable Development and set the scene for the half day event that brought together top-level representatives from different sectors and countries. The Director General of ITSO focused on ICTs as an enabler for the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the role of ITSO in contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. He outlined the challenges to connectivity such infrastructure access, affordability, relevant content, and digital literacy that are preventing communities from accessing this vital resource.

The Director General also identified rural areas as regions that are often underserved by terrestrial infrastructure. He then explained that satellite technology is an important resource for connecting the unconnected because of its cost effectiveness and being

uniquely placed to provide access to rural, remote, and low population density areas.

The Director General also discussed the important role that ITSO plays in promoting the use of ICTs, in particular satellite technology, for sustainable development. One of ITSO's main objectives is to ensure global coverage and connectivity through the use of satellite communications and which presents a powerful commitment to making available the necessary tools for countries to implement ICT projects to fulfill elements of the Sustainable Development Goals. This obligation is set by ITSO's intergovernmental agreement which incorporates the principle set forth in Resolution 1721 (XVI) of the General Assembly of the United Nations, which established that communication by means of satellite should be available to the nations of the world as soon as practicable on a global and non-discriminatory basis.

**“ IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO SIMPLY DISCUSS THE BENEFITS OF ICTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. WE MUST ENSURE THAT THESE TECHNOLOGIES ARE ADOPTED AND UTILIZED. ”**

**PATRICK MASAMBU**

*DIRECTOR GENERAL & CEO OF ITSO*

## 1<sup>ST</sup> SESSION

The first session, “Satellite Broadband”, gave an introduction to sustainable development through ICTs and basic connectivity issues. The session specifically focused on how satellite broadband can be used to alleviate connectivity issues and the new technologies that will make eliminating the digital divide possible.

Mr. Wolfgang Wagner, the Senior Partner at Link International and ITSO’s Technical Consultant, gave an overview on the fundamentals of Satellite Communications and Satellite Broadband. His presentation touched upon holistic approaches to connecting the unconnected and how to leverage available technologies to bring connectivity to those in remote and hard to reach areas. He also considered solutions for connectivity in urban and rural scenarios. Mr. Wagner mentioned the ITSO-IDB study titled *The Provision of Satellite Broadband Services in Latin America and the Caribbean* and encouraged the audience to read the study, in which the different scenarios and solutions for connecting the unconnected are discussed.

Later, Gonzalo de Dios, the Associate General Counsel of Intelsat, S.A., discussed new satellite technologies such as High Throughput Satellites (HTS) and how they will play an important role in universalizing Internet access and bring reliable connectivity to every corner of the Earth. Applications and services that can be enabled by these new satellite technologies were discussed as well as their impact on the SDGs. He also emphasized the importance of mobility and the need to accelerate digital inclusions and to empower communities to deliver broadband.

## 2<sup>ND</sup> SESSION

The second session, “Challenges and Initiatives”, examined in depth some of the existing challenges to universal connectivity such as access to infrastructure, affordability of services, relevant content, and lack of basic digital skills training. The session also looked at some of the existing financial, policy, and regulatory constraints that prevent policy makers and private sector actors from breaking down those connectivity barriers. In order to solve these issues, this session reviewed best policy and funding practices, as well as innovative satellite-based solutions that can alleviate the infrastructure gap.

First, Jean Philippe Gillet the Vice President & General Manager Broadband Services and Todd Cotts, the Senior Principal Product Marketing Manager of Intelsat S.A. gave a presentation addressing the challenges faced by satellite operators when implementing broadband and connectivity solutions. He stated that with its globalized satellite network, Intelsat is able to reach rural and remote communities all over the world with wireless broadband connectivity - communities without existing communications, energy, or modern transportation infrastructure. The presentation also covered the Intelsat Coca-Cola EKOCENTER and other solutions that tackle connectivity and address sustainability. Finally, he expressed that Intelsat is committed to connecting the unconnected, providing Mobile Reach and Wi-Fi Reach solutions for cost-efficient, rapid-deployment of wireless broadband connectivity in rural and remote unconnected populated areas worldwide.

Then, Mr. Alex Wong, the Head of Global Challenge Partnerships at the World Economic Forum (WEF) gave a presentation on the WEF Internet for All Project, which is oriented towards fostering a multistakeholder platform to accelerate innovation and coordinate investment to bridge the digital divide. He mentioned that we are making progress to connect the unconnected but at the current pace, it will take long time. He then analyzed the four principal barriers to universal internet: (i) infrastructure, (ii) affordability, (iii) skills, awareness and acceptance, and (iv) content.

He presented new models of public private collaboration which are urgently required to achieve “Internet for All” as well as the project’s country frameworks, which are currently being deployed in Argentina, Jordan, Rwanda, and South Africa. They have so far brought together over 300+ stakeholders working together in partnership with governments to accelerate digital inclusion and development.

Finally, Mr. Antonio García Zaballos, the Lead Telecommunications Specialist at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), discussed broadband initiatives for sustainable development. Mr. Zaballos explained how the internet matters for economic development and how internet connectivity has an impact on sustainable development indicators. This session also discussed solutions to challenges such as low broadband penetration levels, affordability and low usage as well as infrastructure, content, public policy and regulation, and institutional strengthening. He emphasized the importance of updating the regulatory framework and mentioned that satellite technology can be driver to connect the unconnected. The, he highlighted the need of building broadband infrastructure; pooling public and private investments; stimulating innovation; facilitating interaction between stakeholders and, last but not least empowering individual initiative. Finally, he gave a few examples of what the IDB is doing to connect the unconnected.

## 3<sup>RD</sup> SESSION

The third session, “Applications and Projects,” focused on tangible initiatives that are using satellite broadband to connect communities to important services such as high-speed data and healthcare.

The first presentation was given by Mr. Charles Nahabedian, CEO of VideoKall, on his company’s telemedicine initiative aiming to bring quality healthcare services in convenient locations. The CEO of VideoKall discussed the revolutionary satellite connected VideoKall Unmanned Micro Clinic, which can serve remote or rural areas, especially where patients may have to travel 1-2 hours to reach a doctor or a clinic. He explained how ICTs have the potential to deliver benefits across the global healthcare ecosystem and therefore can be an enabler for SDG 3 Good Health and Well-Being.

For the Symposium’s last presentation, Jean Phillip Gillet of Intelsat, Matt Abrams, Intelsat’s Senior Market Advisor, together with Thembo Nyombi, the Director for the Rural Development Fund of the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) presented the ITSO, UCC and Intelsat pilot project that was aimed at bringing high-speed data and voice to the Kibuku (Ntoroko) and Bufundi (Rubanda) communities of Uganda. The pilot project is currently being used to demonstrate the technical feasibility and ease of deployment of satellite in addressing the identified needs and investigates the commercial viability and sustainability of a satellite-based solution.

# CONCLUSION

The first ITSO Symposium on Achieving Sustainable Development through Satellite Communications was considered a great success. Throughout the three sessions, distinguished speakers discussed a variety of topics, concentrating on the importance of ICTs for sustainable development, and specifically focused on how satellite broadband can be used to alleviate connectivity issues and the new technologies that will make eliminating the digital divide possible.

The main takeaways from the Symposium were:

- Infrastructure, affordability and an enabling regulatory framework are key to connect the unconnected;
- When it comes to connecting the unconnected, there is not one solution that fits all;
- Satellite technology can be a valuable resource in universalizing broadband and other ICT related services;
- Policy makers should incorporate holistic approaches to connecting the unconnected and how to leverage available technologies to bring connectivity to those in remote and hard to reach areas;
- New satellite technologies are challenging assumptions about cost and speed of satellite communications;
- Partnerships are an important resource for facilitating projects for connecting the unconnected;
- ITSO should continue to play a role in assisting its Member States to achieve the SDGs.