



Financing digital infrastructure: Collaborative approaches for a connected future

FfD4 Intersessional Multistakeholder Hearing side event

Title: Financing digital infrastructure: Collaborative approaches for a connected future

Date: October 29, 2024

Time: 10:00 - 11:30 ET

Location: Conference Room 9, United Nations Headquarters, NY

Format: Hybrid

Co-organizers: International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Government of Brazil, Government of Spain, and UNICEF.

Event abstract:

Linked to 70% of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets¹, digital infrastructure is a cornerstone for developing digital economies and achieving the SDGs. Yet, with nearly one-third of the global population still offline², the lack of adequate digital infrastructure—especially in low and lower-middle-income countries—remains a major barrier to inclusive growth. Building the infrastructure needed for universal connectivity requires substantial investment, emphasizing the importance of maximizing traditional financing while introducing innovative financial mechanisms and multistakeholder approaches.

This session will explore collaborative strategies to close the digital infrastructure investment gap, drawing on initiatives such as the Digital Infrastructure Investment Initiative (DIII)³ and Giga⁴. A diverse panel of public sector representatives, Development Finance Institutions (DFIs), and private sector leaders will address the barriers to digital infrastructure investment, highlighting specific examples of innovative financial mechanisms and partnerships required to bridge the digital divide. Attendees will gain actionable insights into multistakeholder strategies to drive investment and promote an inclusive, sustainable digital future.

¹ According to the SDG Digital Acceleration Agenda (ITU, UNDP, 2023).

² ITU, 2023.

³ The DIII is co-led by the ITU and six Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) – AIIB, AfDB, EBRD, IADB, IFC, and IsDB –, with support from Brazil's G20 presidency, to catalyze investments in digital infrastructure.

⁴ The ITU and UNICEF initiative to connect every school to the internet.



Tentative agenda:

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10:00 - 10:05

Welcome and opening remarks

- Daniel B. Cavalcanti, Coordinator for Digital and Telecommunication Policy, Government of Brazil, 2024 G20 presidency (TBC)

10:05 - 10:20

Setting the Stage: Closing the Digital Infrastructure Financing Gap

- Alex Wong, Senior Advisor, Strategic Engagement and Initiatives, ITU
- Maikel Wilms, Partner and Director at BCG and DIII knowledge partner

10:20 – 11:00

Multistakeholder Strategies to Catalyse Digital Infrastructure Investments

- Panellists:
 - H.E. Ambassador Ms. Ana Jiménez de la Hoz, Deputy Permanent Representative of Spain to the UN
 - Alix Jagueneau, Head of External Affairs, GSMA
 - Jacek Kubas, Head of Digital Hub, EBRD
 - Chris Fabian, Giga Co-lead, UNICEF
 - Francesco Saverio Ambrogetti, Principal Adviser Innovative and Alternative Finance for Children, UNICEF
 - Lauren Bieniek, Digital Inclusion Advisor, USAID
 - Tinyiko Ngobeni, Deputy Director General, ICT Infrastructure Development and Support, DCDT, Government of South Africa
- Moderated by Alex Wong, Senior Advisor, Strategic Engagement and Initiatives, ITU

11:00 – 11:10

Interactive Q&A

11:10 – 11:25

Case study: Innovative solutions in Action

- Brazil's School Connectivity Program, presented by Daniel B. Cavalcanti, Coordinator for Digital and Telecommunication Policy, Government of Brazil, G20 presidency

11:25 – 11:30

Closing remarks

- H.E. Ambassador Ms. Mathu Joyini, Permanent Representative of South Africa to the UN