

**BROADBAND COMMISSION**  
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



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Geneva, 13 October 2016

Mr. Ban Ki-moon  
Secretary-General  
United Nations Headquarters  
New York, NY 10017  
USA

Dear Sir,

Please find enclosed a joint statement from the members of the ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development to the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), underlining the vital role of broadband for building and transforming cities and human settlements, and for achieving the commitments of the New Urban Agenda and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This statement will be shared widely through the corporate channels of Commission partners, with the wider UN membership, and the global media.

Yours faithfully,

Houlin Zhao  
Secretary-General  
ITU

Vice-Chair  
*Broadband Commission for Sustainable  
Development*

[www.broadbandcommission.org](http://www.broadbandcommission.org)

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Note verbale

ORIGINAL

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) presents its compliments to the Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to submit a joint statement from members of the ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development..

The International Telecommunication Union avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office for Secretary-General of the United Nations the assurances of its highest consideration.



Geneva, 14 October 2016

**Open Statement from the  
Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development  
to UN Habitat III Conference**

***Broadband for Sustainable Urban Development***  
**October 2016**

*The UN Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development addresses this Open Statement to the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)<sup>1</sup> from 17 to 20 October 2016 in Quito, Ecuador.*

We, the *UN Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development*<sup>2</sup>, affirm our sincere conviction and belief in the vital role of broadband for building and transforming cities and human settlements, and for achieving the goals of the *New Urban Agenda* and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We urge attendees to the **UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)** to show their support for the global roll-out of broadband infrastructure, devices, applications and services to ensure inclusive economic growth and lift people out of poverty around the world.

Today, over half the world's population lives in cities, a proportion which may increase to over 70% over the next thirty years. Although cities occupy a mere 2% of total land surface, cities account for 54% of the world population (World Bank, 2016<sup>3</sup>), 70% of GDP, 60% of global energy consumption, 70% of greenhouse gas emissions and 70% of global waste (UN-Habitat, 2016<sup>4</sup>). This makes sustainable urban development centred on people and the respect of human rights one of the major priorities and challenges of today's societies<sup>5</sup>.

Broadband and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are vital enablers of the three pillars of sustainable development – economic development, social development and environmental protection. Broadband and ICTs can contribute to the New Urban Agenda's Goals of helping to end poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions, reduce inequalities, promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, enhance education, improve human health and well-being, foster innovation and protect the environment.

**Broadband can help drive sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and end poverty**, in both urban areas, as well as more rural areas, acting as a brake on migration to towns and cities. A body of research and evidence suggests that broadband can add to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), drive innovation and add jobs in new sectors, boost labour productivity and energy efficiency. Broadband and ICTs are important enablers driving digital transformation and diversification of national economies and introducing new knowledge-intensive, high-growth products and services.

**Broadband can help achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.** Broadband infrastructure can be used to improve education, literacy and awareness of people's basic rights, including women's and girls'. Women and girls can be empowered by lifelong learning and basic competencies in digital skills, enhancing their access to resources, markets, institutional rights, improved

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<sup>4</sup> UN-Habitat (2016) Habitat III Conference – The New Urban Agenda

<https://www.habitat3.org/bitcache/b581c7d6129c25b03b0102e2a7e5e175e9019535?vid=586129&disposition=inline&op=view>

<sup>5</sup>

The State of Broadband 2016 report: [www.broadbandcommission.org/publications/Pages/SOB-2016.aspx](http://www.broadbandcommission.org/publications/Pages/SOB-2016.aspx)