

Emerging Trends | ICT4SDG | Infrastructure

October 19, 2018

Top Contributors: Why Germany supports ITU

By ITU News

This interview with Wolfgang Crasemann, Head of Delegation for Germany to the Plenipotentiary Conference 2018, is part of an occasional series about why ITU's [Top Contributors](#) support ITU.

1. Why do you support ITU?

The International Telecommunication Union is an important forum for global co-operation in the field of information and telecommunication technologies (ICTs). Germany was a founding member of ITU 153 years ago, so it has been providing technical, political and financial support to the organization for a long time. We believe that, as a United Nations specialized agency with 193 member countries in a multi-stakeholder environment, ITU has an important role to play with regard to international public policy issues in the area of ICTs.

ITU can help to bring the benefits of new telecommunication technologies to all the world's people, thus fostering human, social and economic development and contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Supporting these objectives is an integral part of our country's policy agenda.

2. How does the work of ITU help your strategic ICT initiatives?

ITU does important work in all three of its fields: radiocommunications, standardization and development.

With ITU's role for promoting the rational and efficient use of radio-frequency and satellite orbit resources, the ITU outputs provide guidance on best practices and contribute to the dynamic evolution of Germany's ICT infrastructure. In this way, ITU has a positive impact on the processes of building a digital society in Germany, which, in turn, enhance its competitiveness, attractiveness for investment, and standard of living.

We believe that internationally applicable and valid standards for effective and secure cross-border telecommunications are of the utmost importance in the light of increasingly interlinked telecommunication networks. This is why Germany is committed to helping to shape such standards.

Almost 30 Germany-based Sector Members, Associated Members and scientific and industrial organizations contribute actively to this important work of ITU in various Study Groups and other ITU fora.

ITU initiatives to support developing countries as they improve their ICT infrastructure and intensify the use of modern telecommunication technologies complement Germany's policies for sustainable development worldwide.

3. What specific benefits do you see from your work with ITU? And/or which ITU activities are most relevant to you?

ITU has the crucial role of bringing diverse international stakeholders together for global debate and information-sharing in all areas of ICTs. We are convinced that close co-operation with experts from industry, academia and civil society as well as other organizations is essential for the work of ITU, since digitalization is widespread across all areas of society.

As a forum for global co-operation in the field of ICTs, ITU plays an important role in sharing best practices, reaching a consensus on important international public policy questions in the area of ICTs, and making sure that the voices of stakeholders from all parties including developing countries are heard.

4. Can you provide some examples of how ICTs are helping drive sustainable development in your country?

There are numerous examples of how ICTs are helping drive sustainable development in Germany.

In the mobility sector, for example, self-driving cars and car-sharing can help reduce emissions, as cars can be used more efficiently and fewer cars will be on the road since individuals will not need to actually own cars any more. Another example is smart home technologies for individual households. Smart metering, for example, can help to greatly reduce the use of energy. A third example is the use of intelligent systems in logistics. Through the calculation of the best possible routes, avoiding traffic jams and spreading the cargo as efficiently as possible, emissions from heavy-duty vehicles can be reduced.

5. What do you see as the main ICT industry trends in your country?

We see the main trend in Artificial Intelligence (AI), which we will find increasingly penetrating our daily lives. The quality of AI systems will greatly improve over the next couple of years, as AI will be implemented in numerous products that currently run without it. By way of example, we already find AI applications in our smartphone cameras. Through intelligent software, it is possible to further increase the quality of the pictures taken, while at the same time the hardware remains the same.

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In order to pick up on this trend and to play a more active role in shaping our future with AI, the government is in the process of developing a Federal Government Strategy on Artificial Intelligence for Germany which will be published by the end of this year.

6. Which priority issues should ITU address in the coming years?

Our world is becoming increasingly digital and interconnected. This development is having an impact on our everyday lives, on the way we interact with others, on our work, and on our participation in society.

ITU should support the positive aspects of these developments by increasing the efforts to bring more stakeholders together, including from new groups such as incubators and infrastructure companies. Inclusive digitalization and support for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals are priority issues to be addressed by ITU in this regard. ITU's key priority should clearly be to help to "connect all the world's people".

As an example, improved digital infrastructure, and mobile networks in particular, enhance remote services in all sectors, which is of utmost importance in developing countries in particular. The consequences will be not only better connectivity, but also substantial energy savings and thus lower emissions.

7. How should ITU evolve to meet the changing needs of the ICT industry?

Telecommunication and information technologies are changing the world at a tremendous pace. We believe that the increased involvement of multi-stakeholder representatives in ITU will bring substantial progress to digitalization.

Actors from new groups, such as incubators, start-up associations, capital funds, civil society and non-governmental organizations, should be addressed with a view to identifying new ways to foster digitalization around the world.

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"Connecting the world" should be the key priority in this respect. ITU should strengthen efforts to include a wider range of relevant stakeholders in order to keep up with the fast-paced developments in the ICT sector. This could include new players in the ICT industry as well as other industry verticals, including finance, auto and healthcare, to name just a few.

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