UN-backed study shows technology can help world move to low-carbon economy

The Broadband Bridge: Linking ICT with Climate Action. Photo: ITU

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The use of broadband in information and communication technology (ICT) can help the world transition to a low carbon-economy and address the causes and effects of climate change, according to a United Nations-backed report released today.

"Addressing climate change implies completely transforming our way of life, the way we work, the way we travel, shifting our model of development to a fairer, more sustainable model to ensure our survival," said the Secretary-General of the UN International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Hamadoun Touré, in relation to the report.

"We need to put at stake all the resources available to us, and mobilize the political will to turn discussions and negotiations into agreements and actions," he added, in a press release announcing the release of the report, entitled 'The Broadband Bridge: Linking ICT with Climate Action.'

The report aims to raise awareness of the pivotal role information and communication technology, particularly broadband networks, can play in helping creating a low-carbon economy. It also highlights the importance of public private partnerships in accelerating change.

Conducted by the Broadband Commission Working Group on Climate Change – chaired by the President and Chief Executive Officer of the technology company Ericsson, Hans Vestberg, and including members representing industry, international bodies and non-governmental organizations – the report is based on interviews, case studies and supporting material from more than 20 leaders and experts in the field.

It provides practical examples of how broadband can contribute to reducing greenhouse gasses, mitigate and help adapt to the effects of climate change, and promote resource efficiency, while building more prosperous and inclusive societies.

The report presents 10 recommendations for policymakers and leaders to hasten and strengthen the power of ICT and broadband to accelerate global progress towards a low-carbon economy, including adopting long-term national broadband plans.

These recommendations include convergence in ICT strategies to align them with other sectors, such as energy, health, education and climate; clear regulatory rules to create a framework of investment certainty; cross-ministry collaboration and integrated decision-making to link climate and digital goals, and the use of government procurement to send the right market signals.

The report also calls for partnerships; harmonized metrics and common standards and knowledge sharing.

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