

Chaesub Lee

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Candidate
for the post of
ITU Deputy Secretary-General



What is your view on the role of digital technologies in a rapidly changing world?

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) use digital technologies to reach every corner of society and the economy. Artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of things (IoT), and big data currently have huge impact on our daily lives. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of ICTs, which are consequently now understood to be essential for everyone, something that people and organizations rely upon more and more heavily.

One catchphrase to describe today's rapidly changing world is "digital transformation." It is used increasingly in e-health, e-education, intelligent transport and other industries that have adopted digital technologies to innovate and spread benefits in their respective areas.

ICTs, therefore, play an important role in the innovative digital transformation of communities and industries.

How should ITU evolve to maintain relevance in today's world?

Today, ICTs are at the core of innovation and have become a vital part of everyday life. However, ICT infrastructure is not available everywhere, as evidenced by the fact that so much of the world's population remains unconnected. Some ICT services are still either too difficult to use or simply inaccessible for many people, particularly the aged and those who have specific needs. Moreover, ICTs raise concerns over fake news, online misbehaviour, and security, privacy, and safety issues.



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Considering those issues, ITU should undertake the following in its role as the United Nations (UN) specialized agency for ICTs:

- Stronger efforts to **connect the unconnected**. ITU should extend its collaboration with relevant communities and mobilize **“Investment for Good”** actions based on the UN’s 2030 objectives and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Continue developing ICTs to ensure **universal benefits**. Digital gaps exist everywhere and impact everyone, including gender and age gaps. ITU needs to identify and bridge those gaps.
- Provide a **stable and resilient ICT platform**, in terms both of technology and of policy and regulation, to eliminate concerns and risks. ITU should become the vital gateway for collaboration and coordination with other communities – including other UN organizations.

◆ ***If elected, what are your top three priorities, and how do you plan to achieve them?***

My vision as a candidate for “developing a trusted ICT platform” incorporates three pillars:

1. **Building a resilient global ICT ecosystem:** With ICTs becoming essential elements of our daily life, their resiliency is critical. Resiliency is ensured by enhancing the ecosystem’s stability, security and trust. ITU should harmonize with various stakeholders in the ICT ecosystem on operational and policy aspects, as well as provide a trustworthy platform for experts from diverse professional communities. I have been involved in ICT development for the last 35 years, first as a technical expert and then as an elected official. Therefore, I can contribute to building a resilient ecosystem in both technology and policy terms.
2. **Upgrading ITU’s core competencies:** As the UN tech agency, ITU must provide consistently high-quality service. It should be ready to address diverse requirements from various communities and must be effective and systematic in bringing value to its members. My technical knowledge will help in boosting ITU’s technical competencies. My prior experience as an elected official, overseeing the Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) for the past eight years, will also help in upgrading the efficiency and validity of ITU’s operations.

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3. Strengthening collaboration, coordination, and inclusion within

“OneITU”: Considering the federal structure of ITU, operating as one is critical. From my personal observation, the key to fulfilling the OneITU vision is close collaboration among elected officials. The crucial role of the Deputy Secretary-General – as the harmonizer between the Secretary-General (and General Secretariat) and the three Directors (and their respective Bureaux) – calls for a depth and breadth of experience and knowledge. I have a proven record of technical knowledge, collaborative experience, and accomplishments in coordination.

◆ ***With seven years remaining in the UN Decade of Action, how can ITU, the UN specialized agency committed to connecting the world, help accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals?***

The new ITU leadership team will play an instrumental role in the lead-up to 2030. During the pandemic, we saw more clearly than ever how important the SDGs are for humankind.

Therefore, the future leadership of ITU should address:

- what members expect in terms of sustainable development for 2030;
- ITU's competencies and how these can add value;
- what functions ITU brings to the UN family; and
- ITU's roles in the public and private arenas.

ITU should continue to bring the value of ICTs to the SDGs and increase cooperation among ITU members and UN organizations. AI for Good stands as an excellent benchmarking model. ITU needs to widen the scope to include “Technology for Good” and “Investment for Good” to further accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

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Tell us about your achievements in leadership and building consensus.

I have been involved with ITU for 35 years: 27 years as a technical expert and eight years as Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau (TSB), responsible for ITU-T.

Since my election as TSB Director, I have revived ITU-T as a respected global standards platform. As a result, ITU-T is extending its reach to drive digital transformation through standards for 5G, AI, machine learning (ML), digital agriculture, smart cities, blockchain, intelligent transport systems, and climate solutions, among others. Over the last four years, ITU-T has welcomed more than 200 new industry members representing areas integrated with or affected by ICTs, from health, vehicles, and cities to quantum computing, e-sports communities, and other communities.

I have a lot of experience in strengthening collaboration, coordination, and inclusion. I developed the hands-on Bridging the Standardization Gap training programme supporting accessibility and formed regional groups to bridge gaps in practice. I launched AI for Good, the Financial Inclusion Global Initiative, AI for Road Safety, and other initiatives promoting inclusion. I also established monthly calls with ITU's regional offices to strengthen OneITU.

What else would you bring to the table as the next ITU Deputy Secretary-General?

In my opinion, emerging issues require one collective effort rather than multiple individual efforts, as is largely the case today. Climate change, waste management, and bridging gaps are prime examples. I would steer individual abilities toward collective capability to enable multiple communities to address vital issues constructively.



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