

Tomas Lamanauskas

Lithuania

Candidate
for the post of
ITU Deputy Secretary-General



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

The pandemic has clearly demonstrated the crucial need to be connected to the digital world. Of course, digital technologies have their challenges. However, whenever I hear anyone talk about cyber risks, I also think about the 2.7 billion people who don't face any – but not for a good reason. Being offline, they are excluded from opportunities to access education and public services, earn an income, or keep in touch with loved ones. It is a question of global solidarity to make sure that the benefits of digital are available to all.

We must leverage digital technologies to address the challenges the world faces – including, above all, the climate crisis. If we lose this Earth, nothing else will matter much.

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

Traditionally, connectivity was a domain for specialists. Not anymore. Digital tops everyone's agenda now. It is in every initiative and strategy. That creates a risk for ITU – that we become just one more organization doing digital.

But in this challenge lies an opportunity – to leverage our 157-years of experience and become an indispensable partner in the increasingly digital journey of sustainable development. A few things are needed for this, though.

We need to be clear on what we know and do best. We need to bring the right stakeholders to the table. And we need to be fast and responsive, impact-driven, flexible and agile – to deliver when the world needs us to.



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

Managing ITU is a team sport. And Deputy Secretary-General has probably the least-defined role on the team. But it is generally understood to mean a chief operating officer who ensures the engine of the organization runs for the benefit of members, and the guarantor, through intersectoral coordination, of “One ITU”.

Within this context, my first priority is to **make ITU the place to forge impact-driven partnerships**. Through ITU, all relevant stakeholders should find each other, understand each other, and work together.

Our engagement should reflect the growing complexity of the telecoms and digital field. The investor community, for example, is becoming pivotal to connectivity projects. ITU must help unlock investments to bring connectivity and digital development to all, and especially to the poorest countries and remotest communities.

Second, ITU should **support the industry’s drive for net zero** and address the climate crisis. Every project, every standard, every initiative and activity should have a climate lens.

I’m especially passionate about ITU’s role in disaster communications. We must make sure telecommunication networks are resilient, as climate change makes disasters more frequent. With my experience in the Caribbean and the Pacific, I appreciate first-hand how crucial telecoms are to provide early warning, manage response, and help recovery.

And third, I want to see what I call a **fit-for-the-times ITU**. That means implementing the best management practices and being truly results-oriented, nimble, transparent and accountable.

It means being as close to Member States as possible, empowering regional and area offices, and fully integrating them into a truly global ITU. It means integrating diverse experiences from our membership into our work and ensuring that our staff looks, feels, and thinks like our members, including by leveraging seconded national experts and young professionals programmes.

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

The term “accelerate progress” reflects how for years we’ve taken for granted that there will be progress. But we now find ourselves addressing the risks of sliding backwards. After COVID-19, we’re talking about war, food shortages, energy price shocks, record inflation, economic crises, and, of course, the climate.

The world is tense. The international system is stressed.

We must strive to retain ITU, along with the broader United Nations system, as a place where all can work together – even if, at times, just talking to each other is hard.

Every country – regardless of size, location, wealth, or power – needs to have its voice heard. We must empower our experts to make progress on technical work, as well as finding the time and place for political exchanges.

We may have to learn, when global forces prevent us from finding consensus immediately, not to get too discouraged. Instead, we must focus on the things we can agree on.

◆ ***Tell us about your achievements in leadership and building consensus.***

I first joined ITU as Head of Corporate Strategy – just after the unprecedented breakdown of consensus at the World Conference on International Telecommunications in 2012. The task was to rebuild our trust in each other and our ability to agree.

When we looked for common ground, we found it. This resulted in the Connect 2020 Agenda (now Connect 2030), and the full consensus of Member States at the 2014 Plenipotentiary Conference on ITU’s activities on Internet-related matters and cybersecurity.



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To draw just three more examples from my professional life:

- I contributed in Lithuania to **liberalizing the telecommunication market**, which **delivered** world-leading sector development results.
- In Bahrain, I contributed to **developing a regulatory regime** and establishing an authority that gained **recognition** as the region's "most progressive regulator".
- I redeveloped Vanuatu's **Universal Access Policy**, **credited** with providing 98.8 per cent of the population with mobile coverage and 86.2 per cent with broadband coverage. I also helped bring in the first submarine cable, immediately **cutting broadband prices** by 70 per cent and nearly doubling subscriptions.

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

I would bring a wide range of experience, which enables me to take a 360-degree view of ITU.

During my career, I've represented countries from four regions – with diverse levels of economic development, digital connectivity, and income – including at ITU. I've also represented an ITU Sector Member – a multinational telecoms operator. And I have substantial experience within the ITU secretariat – as Head of Corporate Strategy and more recently as Special Advisor on Crisis Strategy and Partnership Initiatives, helping lead the ITU's COVID-19 response.

◆ **Is there anything else you would like to add?**

Since 1865, ITU has been a place where everyone can come to the table. Whatever the coming years bring, as Deputy Secretary-General I will work tirelessly to help find agreement and make tangible progress – together. With energy, determination, and a spirit of understanding, I am convinced we can continue delivering on our common vision of a truly connected world. The world – more than ever – depends on us succeeding.



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