

Delegation from Canada

Positionpaper for the General Assembly

The topics to be discussed in the General Assembly are *Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development* and *Disaster Risk Reduction*. Canada recognizes the significance of these topics and the necessity to find viable solutions and looks forward to discussing them in the upcoming conference.

I Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development

ITCs play an essential role in economic growth. The covid-19 pandemic made it clear, that access to digital markets, online education and e-government strategies provides the option to maintain and expand organisational, educational, economic and financial standards. The inability of businesses and governments, especially in developing countries, to adapt to the pandemic through digitalisation led to inefficiency, low competitiveness in the global market, high debts and even bankruptcy. As a result, the economic gap between highly developed and developing countries rises due to these market distortions. The divide gets worsened by gender inequalities, urbanisation and spacial distance. The People living in developing countries don't have access to the internet, telecommunication services, electrical devices and therefore to information because of infrastructural deficits and low affordability. Ecologically, ITCs produce a large amount of e-waste since still functioning devices often don't get disposed of sustainably, reused or recycled.

Internationally, the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* (AAAA) from 2015 highlights the need for investments in ICTs to achieve economic growth and financial sustainability. The World Summits on Information Society (WISIS) from 2003 and 2005 acknowledged access to information through the sharing of knowledge on the internet as key part of personal development and freedom and expressed the role of ICT implementation for improved development by adopting the GA resolution 70/12. The WISIS led to the *Declaration of Principles* (2003), that stresses the importance of ITCs for an improved quality of life, the *Tunis Commitment* (2005) and the *Tunis Agenda* (2005), that deal with advantages of e-government and with how to finance ITC usage. A more frequent implementation of digital technologies contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is addressed in the International Telecommunication Unions (ITU) framework *Connect 2030 Agenda for Global Telecommunication/ITC Development*. The ITU also started a project to improve health care systems in Africa through ITCs. Nationally, Canada has adopted the *Digital Operation Strategic Plan 2021-2024* that mainly deals with digital government and how to enable easy, safe and effective usage and access of the governmental services for citizens. The *Canada Digital Adoption Program* (CDAP) launched by the Canadian government releases 4 billion dollars for investment in companies' digital capacities. To improve e-education and access to information, Canada helps to fund the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) and supports its *Digital Economy Strategy for Canada* (2010) and the *Canadian Digital Information Strategy* (2007).

Canada believes, that the access of ICTs, especially in developing countries, can be improved through close cooperation with developed countries. This cooperation should on one side focus on the reuse of the developed countries' digital devices in the developing countries in order to minimize electronic waste and increase the affordability. On the other side it should also intensify economic partnerships through trading contracts and investments in financial innovations, technologies and digitalization. This process can be sped up by supporting digital companies, particularly promising start-ups, by inserting bureaucratic and tax reliefs. The financial stability can be promoted by debt relief and external financial resources, mobilized through official development assistance and foreign direct investments. Countries must also increase their efforts in working out and structuring e-strategies that have to be aligned with the regional administrations. The ITC Development Fund (ITC-DF) should be further expanded and directed at improving digital infrastructure in developing countries in order to enhance the chance to participate in electronic trading methods.

II Disaster Risk Reduction

Nearly every person has felt the consequences of natural disasters today. The Covid-19 pandemic has a tremendous impact on human lives, local economies and social communities. Many people lost their lives, others their jobs and financial liquidity. Rising poverty levels, limited financial possibilities and inefficient administrations are challenges to be faced by many countries. But not only viruses cause disasters. Climate change intensifies the risk for natural disasters like floodings, hurricanes or tornadoes as well. Poverty damage and the loss of infrastructure worsen individual existences and the financial capacities of people as well as governments. Therefore, disasters impose a burden on sustainable development by distracting from focusing on sustainability through the increased efforts of recovering from the negative impacts of the disaster. Disfunctional early warning systems, low resilience, failed coordination and organisation between the government, the private sector, NGOs, professional associations and the general public, inadequate medical aid and missing mass evacuation strategies obstruct efficient disaster risk reduction additionally.

The first internationally adopted framework on disaster risk reduction (DRR) was the *Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World* in 1994, which provided principles and guidelines to tackle disaster risks. The following *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015* substantiated the guidelines and focused on the respective roles of national and regional governments. The current framework, endorsed by Canada along with 186 other countries, the *2015 Sendai Declaration and Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, sets its focus on climate change as the key factor for increasing natural disasters, the essential role of a sufficient administration and acknowledges the threat to the implementation of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, since multiple Sustainable Development Goals are affected by natural disasters, such as SDG 1, 11 and 13. Other important documents about climate change and its danger to disaster risk reduction are the *Paris Agreement* (2015) and the *New Urban Agenda* (2016). The General Assembly has passed plenty of resolutions concerning DRR like 74/218, 61/198 and 56/195. Canada is committed to advancing DRR on a national and international level in close partnership with a diverse range of stakeholders. Public Safety Canada and the Canadian Risks and Hazards Network (CRHNet) worked closely together to bring the Annual National Roundtable on DRR together with CRHNet's Annual Symposium. The document *Building a Resilient Canada The Expert Panel on Disaster Resilience in a Changing Climate* by CCA/CAC and sponsored by Public Safety Canada analyses the current state of Canada's DRR efforts and suggests methods for improvement. Canada's *National Disaster Mitigation Program* (NDMP) provides scientific knowledge on disaster risk reduction strategies and works on developing a residential flood insurance market.

Canada believes, that national and local disaster risk reduction strategies, that are aligned with the Sendai Framework, are an important action to improve resilience for natural disasters. Mitigating measures should contain pro-active tools that assist in deciding where to set focus on funding and efforts in DRR. Such measures can be hazard mapping, adoption and enforcement of land use and zoning practices, implementing and enforcing building codes, flood plain mapping, reinforced tornado safe rooms, burying of electrical cables to prevent ice build-up, raising of homes in flood risk areas, disaster mitigation public awareness programs and insurance programs. All stakeholders have to work together closely to support these measures. The government has to ensure national coordination and communication of mitigation measures and decentralize control. Clear competences, responsibilities and accountabilities have to be defined to enhance public accountability and transparency.