

**Delegation from the Republic of Ireland**  
**Position Paper for the General Assembly Second Committee**

The topics before the General Assembly Second Committee are Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development; and Disaster Risk Reduction. The Republic of Ireland recognizes the significance of promoting ICTs` progression as well as ensuring disaster resilience and looks forward to pursuing these topics at the upcoming session.

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

Around three billion people, a third of the world population, do not have access to the internet according to the UN International Telecommunication Union (ITU). While the number of mobile phone subscriptions in Ireland substantially exceeds the Irish population, a large group of people in Least Developed Countries (LDC) cannot use ICTs. However, ICTs do not only comprise of mobile phones but include various other devices and systems ensuring digital interaction, such as computers or applications enabling users to host videoconferences. The latter gained importance in past years due to the digitalization and globalization of the working world. Pandemic-related impacts on organizations have made the employment of ICTs indispensable and globally displayed how the "instrumental usage" of ICTs aids progress in enlarging abilities and access to education and resources in communities. The 2019 Digital Economy Report (DER) by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) from 2015 indicate that the expansion to a virtual world with ICTs holds immense potential for economic growth while leading to structural changes in the digital economy. In addition, AAAA depicts investments in ICTs as lucrative since digital means enhance global connectedness and efficiency in the private and governmental sector. Essentially, the opportunities for sustainable financial development deriving from ICTs deserve acknowledgement, yet, often lack a specific political and legal frame to optimize usage considering sustainability and comparability. Ireland notices with concern that resource scarcity leading to an unequal access to ICTs adds to other factors creating an economic division between developed and developing countries. Importantly, the expansion of ICTs depends on investments and funding, which requires national resources and financial stability of Member States. As available or invested means greatly differ between Member States, the digital divide between LDC and developed countries widens. In a similar way, within a community, the socioeconomic status determines citizen's technological literacy. Hence, the digital divide can affect one's educational and economic competitiveness, exacerbate social inequality and hinder longterm national financial development.

Recognizing probable sources of conflicts, the Irish Government has repeatedly emphasized the prominence of a safe and sustainable digital transformation. In respect to the usage of ICTs for educational purposes, Ireland launched the Action Plan for Education in 2016 with the aim to promote the Irish Education System and set the foundation for economic and social development. Among other, actions utilize ICTs in effective remote learning methods for conventional classroom contents. Further, the strategy includes an enrichment of these contents by equipping students, regardless of their personal background, with the skillset needed to thrive in a digitalized world with STEM and coding courses. Since the launch of the Action Plan, the number of university students in STEM degrees has been continuously growing and first reviews suggest employers have positively remarked a shift in young people's knowledge of ICTs usage. In February 2022, the Irish Government has enacted the new National Digital Strategy in line with the 2030 Agenda and targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which the international community committed to in 2015. Ireland strongly believes that ICTs and digitalization are most beneficial to economic development, if wireless networks and other data sources can be nationally provided, hence, ensuring connectivity for the Irish population. In order to realize this, Ireland has set the goal to establish fifth generation of cellular network (5G) in all public areas until 2030 and private households or companies with Gigabit. Moreover, Ireland aspires that at least 80 % of the population will have basic digital abilities until 2030 to dynamize the working world. Beyond access and inclusion to ICTs and their employment in economic processes, the government prioritizes investments in cyber security and developing a regulatory framework for a sustainable digitalization in the sense of the SDGs. Given the various possible uses of ICTs, multiple SDGs strive to further develop ICTs and digital skills, such as SGD 4 ("Quality Education"), SDG 8 ("Economic Growth") and SDG 9 ("Industry, Innovation, Infrastructure"). The implementation of the ICTs-related SDGs has been monitored by the ITU. Programs led by organizations such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and regular meetings like the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) have been effective in initiating ICTs progress.

Ireland encourages the continuation of UN actions to provide access to ICTs globally and views a digitalization as a determining factor in financial development in the future. It is recommended to include digital knowledge in curriculums and foster connectivity through the expansion of 4G and 5G networks. In order to achieve the SDGs, Ireland proposes to increase investments in ICTs and educational programs regarding their usage for individuals as well as for businesses. The deriving financial constraints for less developed Member States should be combatted with cooperative financing and funding systems to prevent the enlargement of the digital divide and avert future implications. For this, Ireland endorses periodic evaluations of the digitalization progress and opportunities for economic growth in all Member States and advocates to establish legal frameworks.

## **II. Disaster Risk Reduction**

The financial expenses needed to recover from the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are multiples times higher than the resources that would have been sufficient in order to prevent it. Likewise, experts forecast that the lack of action to limit climate change will result in issues that far outweigh the investments. Global warming leads to sea level rising, floods, droughts and natural disasters, affecting flora and fauna in many regions. Ireland notes with concern that temperatures on the island have been far above standard and the sea has been rising rapidly. The drastic changes in nature lead to food insecurity, job loss, financial independence, displacements and exacerbate global inequality as marginalized and structurally vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected. Although not exclusively, LDCs have been and remain to be most impacted by climate change induced catastrophes due to a lack of resources and means to establish resilience. In many instances, overcoming disasters makes it even more difficult to build a sustainable infrastructure to prevent future emergencies. Given the vicious circle that arises from this, Ireland highlights that worldwide sustainable development relies on the premise that disaster management is prioritized by the international community and expanded to adapt to the challenges posed by the pandemic and climate change.

Measures to execute disaster risk reduction including to guidelines to prevent and prepare for natural disasters have first been set out in the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World in 1994. A decade later, the document found continuation in the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) that was adopted by the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) for the time period of 2005 until 2015. With the intention to guide Member States towards developing consistent disaster prevention methods, the HFA provided detailed guidelines that addressed governments as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Specifically, the HFA drew attention to methods such as early warning systems for tsunamis and global databases on reconstruction while also considering cost-effectiveness and practicability. In 2015, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 - 2030 (Sendai Framework) followed the HFA and was adopted by the WCDR with the aim to structure priority areas and provide legal framework. The Bangkok Principles for the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 - 2030 enhanced crucial aspects of the Sendai Framework and concretized them in specific recommendations. Furthermore, the international community committed to preventing epidemics, decreasing illnesses, especially in LDCs, and combatting climate change until 2030 in the 2030 Agenda adopted by the General Assembly. Due to the overarching implications of disasters for most areas, a linkage to disaster risk reduction can be traced in most SDGs. Prominently, SDG 5 ("Healthy Lives and Well-Being") and SDG 11 ("Climate Change and its impacts") target potential risks and define interim goals to minimize it. Ireland recognizes the complexity of current challenges such as climate change and has enacted the National Planning Framework (2018) to realize sustainable living until 2040. As this calls for distinct measures, Ireland implemented sustainability in various areas including the Transport Sector by enacting the National Policy on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland 2017 - 2030 among other policies. Hence, Ireland has implemented the guidelines of the Sendai Framework in order to meet the SDG and, therefore, prepare to handle potential disasters.

Recognizing the previous global lack of action to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic and the impacts of climate change, Ireland urges to specify current guidelines. In this process, it is vital to monitor progress of reaching the SDGs and ensure that all Member States have access to sufficient resources, in some cases necessitating strategies to support LDCs. Ireland emphasizes that taking precautionary action is cost-effective in comparison to recovery and many disaster affect more than one Member State, thus, encourages regional cooperations and international financial support systems.