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## ITU: \$428 Billion Needed to Connect 3 Billion Additional People By 2030

The International Telecommunication Union estimated in a report released today that it would cost \$428 billion to connect to broadband the remaining 3 billion unconnected people over 10 years old by 2030.

“Meeting the investment necessary to bring every person online by the end of this decade will require an unprecedented and concerted effort from the public and private sectors,” said ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao. “The new Connecting Humanity study led by ITU is the much-needed roadmap that will guide decision-makers on the journey towards accessible, affordable, reliable, and safe digital technologies and services for all.”

“No single actor alone can achieve the ambitious goal of connecting everyone to universal, affordable broadband connectivity by 2030,” according to the report. “As this study outlines, different stakeholders should come together to tackle the challenge. The investment should take a regional approach — with a special focus on Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia — to bring the unconnected online in the next 10 years. While infrastructure investment is the main challenge, investing in policy and regulatory reform and digital skills and local content development are also critical. What is more, complementary efforts on improving affordability — of data, devices and services — will be key to helping close the global digital divide. As ITU is committed to connecting all the world’s people, wherever they live and whatever their means, through these analysis, together with ITU’s Connect 2030 Agenda efforts, connecting all of humanity will get closer to becoming a reality.”

“Over the past several months, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed different types of inequalities within and across countries and regions, including those related to quality of access, affordability and use of the Internet,” a news release said. “With so many essential services pushed online, there is a real and present danger that those without broadband Internet access could be left ever further behind. Hence assessing investment requirements to reach affordable universal connectivity is important to any country concerned with their ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”

More than “12% of the global unconnected population live in remote, rural locations where traditional networks are not easily accessible, most of them in Africa and South Asia. This connectivity gap is exacerbated by the gender digital divide. Across the globe, more men than women use the Internet: only 48% of women as opposed to 58% of men,” the release added. “Whereas in some regions bridging the connectivity gap predominantly means upgrading existing coverage and capacity sites, nearly half of the required radio access network (RAN) infrastructure investment in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and East Asia/Pacific will be greenfield,” according to the release.- Paul Kirby, paul.kirby@wolterskluwer.com

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