



2024 United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
Speaking points: Subhagata Mukherjee, Vice President, Global Head of Sustainability, Nokia

- Technology, including digital technologies and communications infrastructure, is central to sustainable development of societies, industries and communities.
- Whether it's building more resilient nations through modern, secure, and trusted digital infrastructure, or building more inclusive society which provides more opportunities for people by closing the digital divide and leveraging digital gains for healthcare, education, other public services – technology, science and innovation, have strong role to play.
- Digitalization helps sustain economic growth at lower environmental cost. Network infrastructure and the responsible use of AI can help accelerate the Net Zero goals of economies and industries. Nokia, as a global leader in communications infrastructure industry, is committed to sustainable development through digitalization in over 120 countries where we operate in.

1. How are different stakeholders following up on commitments from the [Political Declaration of the SDG Summit](#) on bridging STI divides and the responsible use of STI as drivers for sustainable development?

Nokia approach: As a pioneer and global leader in communications technology, we feel we have a responsibility and an opportunity to **connect the unconnected** through our broadband and innovative connectivity solutions. Bridging the digital divide is a key pillar of our sustainability strategy, where in addition to connecting the unconnected and underserved, we are focused on increasing the uptake and knowledge of **digital technologies and skills**. We have built technology to successfully connect net new 372 million subscriptions in 2023 and helped develop digital skills for another 691,534 people through our social engagement programs over the last two years. These are major achievements, but we are setting our sights even higher with the aim to connect two billion new subscriptions by 2030. This requires commitment, innovation and cross-sector collaboration.

More inclusive society which provides more opportunities for people by closing the digital divide and leveraging digital gains for healthcare, education, other public services.

- Digitalization could be a catalyst for wider economic and societal progress and bring us back on track to deliver the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.
- Meaningful and resilient digital access enables more equity in access to healthcare, education, wider economic opportunities – bridging social inequalities. Digital transformation optimizes food, water and energy supplies and overall better public services, as well as safer and healthier work conditions through IoT.
- AI offers tremendous opportunities; but those un(der)connected would be excluded (bandwidth and processing power needed, cost of subscription). Language models draw from already published information: specific attention is needed to not amplify existing biases and divides.
- International development and growth cooperation community should intensify its efforts to bridge the digital infrastructure gap.
- Digital divide persists. Still 2.6 bn people around the globe remain deprived of digital opportunity. Only 37% of inhabitants use the internet in Africa, only 35% in Least Developed Countries.
- Potential: 2.5% increase in GDP linked to 10% growth in mobile broadband penetration [World Bank].

Examples of **Connecting the unconnected and underserved:**

- Peru: Buried in the Amazon River, a new subaquatic network will interconnect 500,000 users across 400 communities located in the heart of the Amazon rainforest.



- Africa: Nokia has created [Rural Connect](#), an off-grid circular connectivity solution for rural markets. One of the first implementations of Rural Connect was in a town in Cameroon. Within the first two weeks, the number of mobile users increased fivefold.

2. What are some promising ways to foster collaboration between scientific communities, industry stakeholders, financial institutions and policymakers to accelerate the development and deployment of sustainable, science-driven solutions?

More investments in digital infrastructure are needed to enable prosperous societies, flourishing economy, nations' resilience. There is 0.9 trillion USD gap in digital infrastructure investment to reach UN connectivity target by 2030. Higher interest rates and greater economic uncertainty limit private sector investment in rollouts of digital infrastructure. Nokia stands committed to be governments' advisor how to unlock further network rollouts.

- We can help advise which innovative models may overcome limits of commercial rollouts and deliver societal value (innovative business models such the Kayamandi Fiber Project in South Africa, innovative solutions to cut the cost of civil engineering such as pulling cables through river of Amazon or using electricity grid infra in El Salvador)
- **AI also has significant role in accelerating solutions towards climate change.** Earlier this year, Nokia and Orange announced extreme deep sleep energy power saving mode in telecom networks that leverages AI and can reduce energy consumption at radio level by a factor of eight compared to earlier approaches. We stand ready to accelerate the role of AI for societal benefits.

Examples of **Building digital technologies and skills:**

- India: Smartpur is a digital village ecosystem project that looks to empower local rural entrepreneurs and provide them with facilities to make services accessible at the village level through Smartpur centers. In 2023, we supported Smartpur centers in 350 villages across India. The project was recognized as an award winner at the [International Telecommunication Union](#) World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) earlier this year.

More sustainable economy: Digitalization helps sustain economic growth at lower environmental cost. Nokia engages at a global level to increase transparency regarding the footprint of digital tech, leading and contributing to developments of standards (ITU-T SG5, ETSI, ...) and methodologies for the sustainability assessments of digital solutions, in particular life cycle assessments for circularity and climate impacts.