Saudi Arabia: Unifying Global Efforts for Digital Sustainability

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With 2.6 billion people still offline worldwide, Saudi Arabia is working with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to accelerate universal connectivity from a projected 13 years down to just five. This bold step reflects the Kingdom's growing role in unifying global efforts for a sustainable digital future through strategic partnerships and international initiatives.

H.E. Eng. Haytham AlOhali, Acting Governor of CST, emphasized this commitment by stating:
"To make digital transformation inclusive, we collaborate with regulators worldwide to create a more innovative and cooperative digital ecosystem. By turning regulation into a driver of enablement, transparency, and the adoption of emerging technologies, we aim to strengthen both regional and global collaboration through guidelines that reflect best regulatory practices."

This vision was most recently showcased at the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR25), hosted in Riyadh, where Saudi Arabia and the ITU convened policymakers, regulators, and industry leaders from around the world. During the symposium, the

H.E. Eng. Haitham Alohaly Governor (CST)

A high-level session on "Collaborative Regulation for Digital Development" at GSR25 in Riyadh

Kingdom introduced pioneering initiatives such as the Digital Sustainability Toolkit and advanced discussions on bridging the digital divide, underscoring its leadership in aligning global efforts toward inclusive and sustainable digital transformation.

The Kingdom has prioritized the ICT sector as a key driver of economic and social development. This focus is reflected in its growing partnership with the ITU, where Riyadh actively promotes global dialogue on inclusive digital transformation, bridging the digital divide, and ensuring the sustainability of digital infrastructure.

Local and international visitors at the Media Oasis during the recent GSR25 event in Riyadh

Among Saudi Arabia's notable achievements domestically and internationally, the Open Access initiative exceeded its target by connecting over 3.9 million homes to fiber-optic networks, enhancing high-speed connectivity and creating a conducive environment for the digital economy. National digital workforce capacity has grown to more than 380,000 professionals, up from 150,000 in 2018, with female participation reaching 35%, surpassing the G20 average.

On the international front, Saudi Arabia collaborated with the ITU to launch the "AI Readiness Framework," aimed at supporting countries in adopting artificial intelligence solutions safely and inclusively. Additionally, the Kingdom introduced the "Digital Sustainability Toolkit," the first global framework helping governments balance technological advancement with environmental protection. These initiatives earned recognition from the ITU, which described Saudi Arabia as a "strategic partner shaping the global digital future."

The Kingdom has also addressed global internet connectivity challenges, noting that while approximately 200 million people connect to the internet each year, 2.6 billion remain offline. Through its partnership with the ITU, Saudi Arabia is accelerating international efforts to connect these populations in under five years, instead of the previously projected 13, thereby reducing the digital divide and promoting digital equity.

Furthermore, Saudi Arabia supports international dialogues on digital sustainability, including space debris management, and promotes a circular digital economy through initiatives for recycling electronic devices, reducing the environmental impact of modern technologies.

Today, Saudi Arabia is advancing a model that combines technological leadership with sustainability. By aligning domestic achievements with global partnerships, the Kingdom is

positioning itself at the center of international efforts to build a digital future that is more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable.

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