Universal Access to the Internet

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IEEE endorses the goal of universal access to the internet and supports national initiatives and international collaborations designed to expand access to the billions of people in both developed and developing countries around the world who do not have access to the internet.[1]

The internet today is an essential tool in providing and protecting the fundamental economic, social, cultural, civil, and political human rights set forth in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international agreements and treaties.

Universal access to the internet will also contribute to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.[2] Indeed, it would be very difficult to achieve many of them without use of the internet. World citizens increasingly rely on the internet for access to education, health care, employment, commerce and

[1] According to Statista, in 2025 there were 5.56 billion active internet users worldwide, accounting for around two-thirds of the world's population (accessed 19 June 2025). See https://www.statista.com/topics/1145/internet-usage-worldwide/.

[2] The UN states that universal internet access is one of the key transitions that the UN Secretary-General has called for to advance progress towards the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (accessed 19 June 2025). See https://unsdg.un.org/latest/stories/wired-good-digital-connectivity-sustainable-future.

information, and the Internet of Things has the potential to dramatically increase the positive social and economic impacts of global connectivity.

The challenge of connecting billions of people who do not have internet access will require national, regional, and international efforts involving a broad array of public and private organizations engaged in open and transparent collaboration, coordination, and innovation.

Through its global reach and capabilities, IEEE has an important role to play in advancing solutions to the global internet access challenge. Promoting universal internet access is inherent in IEEE’s mission of fostering technology innovation and excellence for the benefit of humanity.

To this end, IEEE calls upon the world-wide community of engineers, scientists, industry leaders, policy experts and others to apply their knowledge and skills to address the challenge of universal access to the internet, and the associated issues of affordability, reliability, security, safety, trust, privacy, governance, participation, fairness, and prosperity.

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