

**Opening Remarks of International Telecommunications Society (ITS) Chair, Stephen Schmidt, for ITS webinar, *Driving Digital Transformation: International Comparisons of Spectrum Policy*, 15 November 2022.**

Welcome!

Thank you for being here today!

We are joined today by members of the ITS family spanning Africa, MENA, Europe, the Americas and Asia.

We are grateful to everyone that has chosen to invest their time and attention with us today.

An extra shout out to those joining us from Asia, where it is quite late right now, and in particular to the groups of students joining us from Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong.

The *International Telecommunications Society* (ITS) is a neutral forum and meeting place where scholars, policy practitioners, and members of industry come together to discuss and explore the most timely and pressing issues in communications policy, in a spirit of friendship and scholarship.

Today's webinar is the fifth ITS webinar of 2022 and our 16th webinar since the onset of the pandemic.

This webinar considers the global experience in spectrum management policy in particular in relation to 5G deployment.

This is the second of a trio of ongoing ITS webinars comparing key policies that underpin the digital economy. Previous seminar considered the role of big data and the next webinar in the series will be devoted to AI regulation (early 2023).

**Today's webinar:**

It is now well recognized that the availability and adoption of advanced wireless networks contributes to productivity and helps to underpin comparative advantage for nations.

It is *also* becoming clear that wireless connectivity is consequential for health, social inclusion and climate outcomes.

Traditional spectrum policy and practice needs to evolve and grow to take into account these broader considerations.

These challenges arise in especially acute form with 5G. 5G is a technology that is expected to lead to the following positive externalities:

- Expansion of new use cases to help fight climate change;
- Bridging of digital divides for remote and rural communities; and
- Driving and underpinning national competitiveness and innovation.

**A question that arises, then, is:**

- How can spectrum policy be re-imagined to *best* enable the positive social and economic externalities of connectivity?

**Further questions around the changing role of the spectrum policy include:**

- How do national spectrum policies compare in terms of their goals, tools and results?
- Are there viable paths for meeting traditional spectrum policy goals (allocation, assignment, efficient use) while also enabling the positive social and economic externalities of connectivity?
- Are traditional spectrum policy goals and next generation spectrum policy goals capable of reconciliation?

**Today's speakers:**

We have an outstanding group of speakers today who are uniquely situated to speak to these issues:

**Ms. Janette Stewart:**

- from Analysys Mason,
- drawing on her previous experience in Ofcom,
- will provide a global tale of the tape, comparing spectrum policy outcomes across countries.

**Dr. Petrus Potgieter:**

- from the University of South Africa,
- ITS Board member and ITS Executive Committee member
- He will focus on how spectrum policy can drive economic development.

**Dr. Marja Matinmikko-Blue**

- from the University of Oulu, in Finland.
- She will share her experiences from Finland, an early leader in the 5G race.

**Dr. Helaina Gaspard**

- from the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD) at the University of Ottawa
- She will draw on Canada's experience, as a late-follower in the the 5G race.

**For organizing this webinar, I would like to thank:**

- **Our academic host**, Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD), University of Ottawa;
- **Our corporate host**, TELUS Communications and our ITS corporate members who make these important conversations possible; and
- **And all of you who have joined today from across the world!** We look forward to your questions, comments and insights and we will leave a generous amount of time for your questions.

Enjoy!

Stephen Schmidt

ITS Chair