

ITU: 50 Percent of all People on Earth Covered by 3G

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The ITU has published its annual report, which estimates that by the end of 2013 there will be 6.8 billion total mobile-cellular subscriptions. The report, which also looks at fixed-line broadband, concluded that mobile broadband over smartphones and tablets has become the fastest growing segment of the global information and communication technology (ICT) market.

Adding to that picture of global connectivity, the ITU report estimates that mobile broadband connection over 3G/3G+ networks are growing at an average annual rate of 40 percent, equating to 2.1 billion mobile-broadband subscriptions and global penetration rate of almost 30 percent.

Nearly 50 percent of all people worldwide are now covered by a 3G network.

ITU Secretary-General Dr Hamadoun I. Touré said in a statement that overall the report is reason for optimism, as it paints a picture of governments prioritizing the buildout and expansion of ICT.

“Our most pressing challenge is to identify ways to enable those countries which are still struggling to connect their populations to deploy the networks and services that will help lift them out of poverty,” Touré said.

For the first time the report also presents the results of a price data collection exercise that was carried out for four different types of mobile-broadband service. Results show that in developing countries mobile broadband is now more affordable than fixed broadband, but still much less affordable than in developed countries.

Austria has the world’s most affordable mobile broadband, according to the report, while Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have the least affordable, with service costs equal to or higher than average monthly gross national income (GNI) per capita.

Other countries that rank well for mobile broadband affordability included Qatar, the United Kingdom, Germany, Kuwait and France.

Source URL (retrieved on 12/13/2013 - 1:16pm):

<http://www.wirelessweek.com/news/2013/10/itu-50-percent-all-people-earth->

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Published on Wireless Week (<http://www.wirelessweek.com>)

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