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LIBERTY GLOBAL AND EY REPORT OUTLINES PATH FOR TELCO SECTOR TO REALISE MAJOR AI-DRIVEN SUSTAINABILITY GAINS

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A [new report](#) from Liberty Global and EY suggests that the strategic adoption of AI in the telco sector has the potential to drive major sustainability gains over the next decade.

The report – ‘Smarter networks, greener planet’ – takes an in-depth look at how the telecommunications industry can harness artificial intelligence (AI) in the coming years to help meet important sustainability goals in the sector.

Whilst acknowledging the energy intensity of AI – through practices such as the widespread integration of GenAI features into mobile applications - the report also highlights the technology’s potential for driving operational efficiencies within the telco sector. These include applications such as optimizing energy use in mobile and fixed networks and using AI-enhanced video technology to improve efficiency in network builds.

The scale of the challenge created by AI-driven applications is illustrated by research cited in the report that shows that in just two years’ time the AI sector could consume between 85 and 134 terawatt hours (TWh) of electricity annually – approximately 0.5% of total global consumption and roughly equivalent to the current electricity usage of the Netherlands.

Sustainability gains through AI would leverage the sector’s long-standing reputation for innovation, illustrated by research in the report which states that telco operators now carry as much as 10 times more data compared with five years ago, whilst maintaining similar levels of energy consumption.

Overall, the report strikes an optimistic tone. Outlining four hypothetical outcomes for AI and sustainability in the next ten years, it predicts that the most likely is a scenario whereby AI helps minimize the extra energy required to support a huge growth in volume of data carried over telecommunications networks, while also yielding a number of other benefits. This would be achieved by the telco industry utilizing advanced AI to optimize the allocation of resources, predict maintenance needs in advance and manage network traffic in real-time.

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In this scenario – labelled ‘Growth’ in the report - telecommunications networks would handle 50 times more data traffic than now, while increasing energy consumption by only 10%. This would see the elimination of Scope 1 and 2 emissions, a 70% increase in the lifespan of equipment, and networks becoming net contributors to clean energy production.

The report outlines eight key recommendations that can lead the telecommunications sector to reach such a desirable outcome:

- Conduct comprehensive assessments of AI's sustainability impact to identify opportunities for reducing energy consumption and waste
- Prioritize AI-driven network optimization to enhance efficiency across mobile and fixed-line networks
- Accelerate the transition to AI-managed renewable energy sources by optimizing integration of diverse energy sources, managing storage, and predicting future needs
- Implement AI-enhanced circular economy practices to extend equipment lifespans and improve recycling and reduce waste
- Develop comprehensive AI governance frameworks that integrate sustainability considerations
- Foster an organisational culture that values both technological innovation and sustainability through cross-functional collaboration
- Invest in workforce development - equipping teams with necessary skills in AI, data analytics, and environmental management
- Lead efforts to develop industry-wide standards for sustainable AI, establishing common metrics for measuring environmental impact

Mike Fries, Chief Executive Officer, Liberty Global, comments: "As data traffic continues to grow exponentially, we are committed to playing our part in reducing emissions throughout our networks and operations. We're excited about the potential of AI to help us do this - and we're already seeing the benefits in areas such as the optimization of energy use in our networks and making our network builds more efficient."

Dr Harvey Lewis, partner for AI at EY and the author of the report, adds: "While the scenarios we present are speculative, they highlight the strategic potential of AI in the telco sector. Success will depend on network collaboration across Europe, investment in skills and infrastructure to create more competition, and a holistic approach to AI adoption that balances immediate efficiency gains with long-term sustainability impacts."

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Liberty Global's consolidated businesses generate annual revenue of more than \$4 billion, while the VMO2 JV and the VodafoneZiggo JV generate combined annual revenue of more than \$18 billion.**

Liberty Growth, our global investment arm, has a portfolio of more than 75 companies and funds across the content, technology and infrastructure industries, including stakes in companies like ITV, Televisa Univision, Plume, AtlasEdge and the Formula E racing series.

* Represents aggregate consolidated and 50% owned non-consolidated fixed and mobile subscribers. Includes wholesale mobile connections of the VMO2 JV and B2B fixed subscribers of the VodafoneZiggo JV.

** Revenue figures above are provided based on full year 2023 Liberty Global consolidated results and the combined as reported full year 2023 results for the VodafoneZiggo JV and full year 2023 U.S. GAAP results for the VMO2 JV.

Telenet, the VMO2 JV and the VodafoneZiggo JV deliver mobile services as mobile network operators. Virgin Media Ireland delivers mobile services as a mobile virtual network operator through third-party networks. UPC Slovakia delivers mobile services as a reseller of SIM cards.

Liberty Global Ltd. is listed on the Nasdaq Global Select Market under the symbols "LBTYA", "LBTYB" and "LBTYK".

For more information, please visit www.libertyglobal.com or contact:

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Investor Relations

Michael Bishop +44 20 8483 6246

Bethany Cannon +44 7714 657 776

Corporate Communications

Bill Myers +1 303 220 6686

Matt Beake +44 20 8483 6428