

Conclusions from ITU Regional Forum on Bridging the ICT Standardization and Development Gaps

Kigali, 2-4 October, 2007

1. At the initiative of the Directors of ITU-T and ITU-D, and generously hosted by the government of Rwanda, a Regional Forum on Bridging the ICT Standardization and Development Gaps was held in Kigali, Rwanda, 2-4 October 2007. Some 160 participants from 38 mainly African ITU Member States took part in the meeting, with several countries being represented at government Minister or company CEO level.
2. The meeting participants recognized the importance of the standardization gap which results from the continued shortage of human resources in the standardization field in developing countries. As a result, there is frequently a low-level of participation in Study Group meetings and other ITU-T and ITU-R meetings. One consequence of this is difficulties in accessing and implementing ITU Recommendations, as recognized in PP Resolution 123 (Antalya, 2006).
3. The meeting participants also recognized that the standardization gap has several different dimensions and that effective participation involves a process of "learning by doing" that can only be acquired over a period of years. The standardization gap contributes to the persistence of the wider digital divide. In this respect, a sustained commitment to raising standards awareness and to capacity-building is of particular importance and the meeting called on ITU-T and ITU-D to step up their efforts in promoting capacity-building in the field of ICT standardization. Member States themselves should also create vehicles to facilitate effective participation in ITU's activities and to ensure consistency and continuity of participation.
4. The meeting participants welcomed the initiative taken by the Directors of the ITU-T and ITU-D to hold an annual series of Regional Forums on Bridging the Standardization Gap, with one meeting per ITU region per year. This issue will also be addressed at a special Global Standardization Symposium, to be held just ahead of WTSA-08, on 20 October 2008. They further welcomed the establishment of a special fund to support the implementation of the plan of action set out in WTSA Resolution 44 (Florianópolis, 2004).
5. The meeting participants particularly welcomed the decision taken by Council 2007 to make permanent the free-of-charge access to ITU-T Recommendations online, considering that this will greatly widen the level of access to ICT standards by engineers, students and others in developing countries, and is therefore a substantial positive step towards bridging the standardization gap. The participants also appreciated the TSB Director's views on increasing the emphasis on implementation guidelines for ITU-T Recommendations, and his observation on the opportunities for African countries to seek leadership positions at WTSA-2008, and to use those as leverage points for increasing the number of Study Group and other meetings held within the African continent.
6. Meeting participants requested that this summary, and the full meeting report (available at: <http://www.itu.int/ITU-T/worksem/standardization/kigali/index.html>), be forwarded as an input document to the Connect Africa Summit, to be held on 29-30 October 2007, also in Kigali, Rwanda. In the light of the focus of the Connect Africa Summit, *inter alia*, on achieving connectivity goals by 2015, the participants recognized the important contribution that can be made by standardization, awareness-raising and ICT capacity building in making these goals easier to achieve.