

## **Question 23/2: The unique telecommunication/ICT needs of small island developing states (SIDS)**

### **1 Statement of the situation**

In 1994, the Global Conference on the sustainable development of small island developing states (SIDS) adopted the Program of Action for the sustainable development of small island states. As follow-up to this landmark conference, the United Nations organized an international meeting to review the implementation of the programme of action for the sustainable development of the small island developing states that was held in Port-Louis, Mauritius from 10 to 14 January 2005. The two conferences recognized the special needs of small island developing countries especially because many SIDS consist of a number of small islands. This fragmentation increases their economic and social vulnerability and their quest for universal access to appropriate and affordable telecommunications/ICT. This principally arises from their isolation, their small size, small population, ecological fragility, topography, narrow resource base, limited local capital for productive investment and excessive dependence on imports. The international conference on the sustainable development of small island developing states specifically mentioned telecommunications/ICT and recognized its importance to this group of countries in poverty alleviation, provision of services in Government, business and the community.

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which was held in two phases in Geneva, 10-12 December 2003 and in Tunis, 16-18 November 2005, drew the attention of the international community on the importance of creating a global information society paying particular attention to the special needs of Small Island Developing States. WSIS noted that "connectivity was a central enabling agent in building the Information Society and highlighted that a well-developed information and communication network infrastructure and applications, adapted to regional, national and local conditions, easily-accessible and affordable and making greater use of broadband and other innovative technologies where possible, could accelerate the social and economic progress of countries".

The WSIS Declaration of 2003 stressed that "infrastructure is an essential foundation of inclusive information society" (see principle 2), and also that "connect villages and establish telecommunication access points" is the number 1 of the action plan. In this respect the deployment of shared access infrastructure through satellite technologies by way of, but not limited to,

multipurpose community telecentres (MCT), public call offices (PCO) and community access centers (CAC) is an effective way of providing universal access thus, fulfilling the goal of providing telecommunications access down to the individual.

Decisions that may drive first the examination and then the choice of particular techniques and solutions for provision of telecommunications services may be influenced, but not limited to the following:

- a) Increasing availability of wireless and other technologies that provide enhanced capabilities at progressively lower costs.
- b) Experience gained by SIDS in many parts of the world in developing, implementing and refining major telecommunications/ICT projects as a way of using "best practices" as outlined in the work of ITU-D under Programme 6 of the Doha Action Plan.
- c) Progress being steadily made on human resource development/management issues which are fundamental to establishing sustainable telecommunication infrastructure.

The World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-06) adopted Programme 6 to incorporate into its work special actions for SIDS. WTDC-06 also adopted Resolution 16 on Special actions for the least developed countries and small island developing states. Resolution 17 (Rev. Doha, 2006) on the Implementation of regionally approved initiatives at the national, regional, interregional and global levels in its Annex 3 (4) entitled, "The unique telecommunication/ICT needs of Pacific islands and small island developing states in the Asia-Pacific region" calls for the establishment of Question(s) in ITU study groups for identifying communication technologies which are available and will work for SIDS in a cost-effective manner; guidance for SIDS through best practices for installing and maintaining the communication equipment recommended for their unique circumstances, where basic infrastructure such as electrical power is either lacking or absent; practical advice and assistance for SIDS in utilizing communication equipment and programmes for e-health, e-education, disaster and emergency communications, etc. in their unique environment, which is different from those in remote land-based or landlocked states; and ongoing tailor-made capacity building and exchange programmes for SIDS on various aspects of telecommunications/ICTs ranging from policies, regulations and operations to technologies in a dynamically evolving digital era in order to optimize digital opportunities.

The ITU-D Study Group 2 meeting that was held from 7 to 9 September 2006 considered Document 2/061 "Excerpt from Resolution 17 (Rev. Doha, 2006) likely to require consideration by ITU-D Study Group, see Asia Pacific 4", transmitting the request of the Doha Conference through Resolution to Study Group 2 requesting the possibility of creating a new Question to deal with matters on how to assist SIDS in developing their telecommunication needs. The Chairman of the ITU-D Study Group 2 requested the Head of Programme 6 to propose a draft Question that should be circulated to SIDS for comments before its adoption.

## **2 Question for study**

To identify cost-effective telecommunication/ICT technologies that can bridge the digital divide and bring digital opportunities for all, particularly small island developing states (SIDS) facing unique challenges such as isolation, distance, and lack of resources: provide a variety of solutions and best practices for the development and use of telecommunications/ICTs, that may include multipurpose community telecentres (MCT), that minimize the risk and uncertainty inhibiting investment in SIDS in all the regions of the world; and assist SIDS in their ongoing needs for

development and maintenance of skills in the enabling telecommunication/ICT policy, regulatory, legal and operational environment to migrate to and manage new telecommunication/ICT technologies, networks and services through subregional, regional and international cooperation.

There are a variety of issues that SIDS will be interested in addressing within the remaining period of the Study Question. It is proposed that the key issue for study is the range and scope of technologies, techniques and solutions that are expected to play a significant role on the provision of telecommunications/ICT in SIDS especially for rural and remote areas. It is further proposed that the study progresses in stages to cover the remaining period of this cycle in the following manner:

- Step 1 – Identification of the full range of potential technologies, techniques and solutions that can significantly impact on the provision of telecommunications services in SIDS with an emphasis on those that employ the latest technology designed to lower the infrastructure capital and operating costs.
- Step 2 – Investigate and report on how the technologies and techniques identified above can be used to best deliver the range of services and applications required by populations in SIDS and adapted to the need of users.
- Step 3 – Make an assessment of the likely sustainability of the solutions identified in the above steps.
- Step 4 – Report on a range of case studies that clearly demonstrate how a range of techniques based on new technology aimed at providing reduced capital and operational cost solutions and enhancing community participation can maximize benefits of telecommunications infrastructure in SIDS for poverty alleviation and overall economic and social development.

In dealing with the above studies the work under way in response to other Questions being dealt with in ITU-D Study Group 2 Questions 10-2/2 and 20-2/2 are very relevant to these studies. In the same way, those studies shall take into account cases related to indigenous communities, and gender as well as the vulnerability of SIDS to disasters.

NOTE – The above four steps will also take into consideration any relevant activity undertaken by Programme 6 in relation to emergency telecommunications for the benefit of these countries.

### **3 Expected output**

The output will be a yearly progress report and a final report on the results of the work conducted for each step above together with one or more Recommendations at appropriate times either during the course or at the conclusion of the cycle.

### **4 Timing**

Output will be generated on a yearly basis. The yearly output will be analyzed and assessed in order to update the work-plan for the next year, and so on.

### **5 Proposes**

The idea of this Question was originally proposed by the Independent State of Samoa as well as small island developing states in the Asia Pacific Region to the WTDC-06, discussed by the ITU-D Study Group 2 Meeting in September 2006. Adoption of this Question by the Study Group is recommended and support from SIDS in other regions (Africa, Arab, and Americas) is expected.

## 6 Sources of input

Contributions are required from Member States and Sector Members as well as inputs from relevant BDT programmes, particularly Programme 6 of the Doha Action Plan dealing with least developed countries, small island developing states and emergency telecommunications. These contributions will enable those responsible for work on the Question to develop the most appropriate conclusions, recommendations and output.

## 7 Target audience

Target audience	Developed countries	Developing countries and LDCs	SIDS
Telecom policy makers	Yes	Yes	Yes
Telecom regulators	Yes	Yes	Yes
Service providers (operators)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Manufacturers	Yes	Yes	Yes

### a) Target audience

Depending on the nature of the output, low to high level managers working for the governments, operators and regulators in SIDS are the predominant users of the output.

### b) Proposed methods for the implementation of the results

To be decided during the study period.

## 8 Proposed methods of handling the Question

This will be dealt with within ITU-D Study Group 2.

## 9 Coordination

The ITU-D study group dealing with this Question will need to coordinate with:

- Relevant focal points in BDT and relevant ITU-D Study Group 2 Questions.
- Coordinators of relevant project activities in BDT.
- Work in progress in the other ITU Sectors.

## 10 BDT programme link

Doha Action Plan Programme 6 namely, **Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States, and Emergency Telecommunications.**

## 11 Other relevant information

New information is to be apparent within the life of this Question.

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