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Report on Year 2000 Activities

Introduction

1.   The World Telecommunication Development Conference (Valletta, 1998) placed the Year 2000 Problem on the agenda of a focus group under ITU-D Study Group 2. In March 1998, ITU-T Study Group 2 established the Year 2000 Task Force with the objective of raising awareness of telecommunication operators, providing practical advice and support and ensuring cross-fertilization of best practices amongst operators. The mandate has been further reinforced by Resolution COM5/20 of the Minneapolis Plenipotentiary Conference (PP-98) entitled "Urgent need for prompt action to address the Year 2000 problem".

2.   Following the decision of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) and in agreement with the Chairman of ITU-D Study Group 2, it was agreed that the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) address the Year 2000 issues in operational terms, viz., provision of assistance to developing countries. Accordingly, the BDT Director appointed a focal point for the Year 2000 activities.

3. BDT Year 2000 activities are carried out in close and active collaboration between the ITU-T Study Group 2 Year 2000 Task Force and the Telecommunication Development Bureau. BDT participates in the ITU Year 2000 Task Force in the capacity of chairing the sub-group on assistance to developing countries.

4.   BDT Year 2000 Project has the following components:

- Raise awareness of potential problems and potential solutions among developing countries and disseminate information required for establishing and managing Year 2000 programmes at national and sectoral levels;
- Provide platforms for the exchange of information amongst operators in the developing countries with operators with established Year 2000 programmes and suppliers;
- Provide expert support to countries requesting assistance in launching and managing their Year 2000 programmes;
- Conduct assessments/studies highlighting the needs of developing countries; and
- Collaborate with other organizations, viz., *infoDev* Programme of the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, and Regional Telecommunication Organizations (viz., APT, ASETA, RCC etc.).

Information Dissemination

5.	Absence of awareness is an obstacle that must be overcome in order to enable operators and governments to initiate action to address the problems associated with the year 2000 risks. Regarding the lack of awareness at government level, BDT pursued the "awareness raising" component by sending communications to Member States and sector members and organizing a series of workshops in different regions. By raising awareness and providing a forum for the exchange of information, the goal is to prevent at least major system failures related to the Year 2000 problem. BDT sent in July 1998 a communication to administrations and sector members with a note on the Year 2000 problem and the tool kit developed by the Task Force together with the ITU Year 2000 self-assessment questionnaire. Efforts were made to contact administrations who had not responded by that date. Subsequently over 100 responses were received.

6.	The workshops brought together year-2000 project coordinators of telecommunication operators and other officials from administrations, with the aim of raising awareness of the problem and facilitating the sharing of information and experience about managing projects.

7.	In addition, BDT responds to requests for specific information from operators and Administrations with the assistance of the experts of the Task Force.

ITU Year 2000 Guide

8.	Through active collaboration between a number of experts of the ITU Y2K Task Force and BDT, a comprehensive Year 2000 Guide has been prepared. The Guide provides telecommunication operators with a high-level overview of the process of dealing with the Year 2000 phenomenon.

9.	The Guide has been widely distributed, under the signature of the ITU Secretary-General, to all ITU Member States and sector members, as well as to other international and regional bodies and standards organizations. A similar guide, focusing on contingency planning and business continuity, with particular reference to the conditions of developing countries, is under preparation and will be distributed widely.

Workshops

10.	Workshops were organized in different parts of the world in conjunction with the ITU Year 2000 Task Force and in collaboration with the Information for Development Programme (*infoDev*) of the World Bank. Special effort has been made to include as many operators as possible, satellite operators and major vendors, as well as major operators with established programmes, in the belief that participation by these operators helps promote a cross-fertilization of experience and ideas.

11.	The objectives of the workshops are to:
- Generate awareness about the implications of the problem;
- Initiate and strengthen information sharing between operators with established programmes and developing countries;
- Promote and strengthen effective supplier relations; and
- Provide information, standards, tools and techniques in evolving strategies and developing action plans to manage successful compliance programmes, including contingency plans.

12.	The participants came from Administrations and operating agencies, major vendors and international and regional satellite organizations and the World Bank. The workshops addressed a

range of issues, which are essential to a successful Year 2000 compliance programme, such as testing, quality assurance, management of supplier relations and contingency planning. The supplier panels featured presentations on the status of compliance of products, the capacity to meet the needs of operators and their own contingency plans. The following table provides details of the workshops held so far:

Region	Venue	Dates	No of Admins
Africa (French speaking)	Rabat	21-22 September 1998	19
Arab countries	Cairo	2-3 December 1998	11
Asia-Pacific	Gold Coast	7-9 March 1999	41
South America	Foz-do-Iguacu	22-23 March 1999	21
CIS	Moscow	12-13 April 1999	14
Central and Eastern Europe	Warsaw	9-10 June 1966	5

13.   The workshops have been successful in the objective exchange of information on the programmes of various countries. The presence of suppliers provided a good opportunity for both parties to discuss problems associated with their equipment and systems. The workshops have established that awareness of the problem is rising. Several countries have national planning mechanisms in place. Even in the absence of national programmes, telecommunication operators have begun addressing the issue, though it is a matter of concern that lack of national planning may aggravate interdependency problems. In many developing countries progress is typically constrained by factors such as:

- Lack of commitment at highest levels of the organization;
- Sound project management;
- Shortage of skills at various levels;
- Lack of facilities such as testing environment;
- Lack of funds; and
- Low supplier response.

14.   The workshops enabled the identification of countries that need further assistance as well as the future information needs of developing countries. The workshops decided to constitute themselves as Regional Working Parties of the ITU Year 2000 Task Force in order maintain a flow of information. While enlarging the scope of participation in the Task Force, this structure facilitates a continuous sharing of experience and creates a forum in which to discuss mutual issues and problems and develop common solutions.

15.   The feedback received on the usefulness of the workshops has been encouraging, as seen by the response from an operator: "we learnt quite a lot particularly on the product dependency mapping as brought out by [the experts] and the need to be very thorough on documentation and certification". The usefulness of the workshops is also seen by the fact that the attending suppliers present offered to share with the operators their inventory of their equipment installed in the region.

Future Programme: Focus on Business Continuity

16.   Following the first phase of awareness raising workshops, a major element of the future work programme focuses on technical assistance in the area of business continuity planning. As part of this activity training programmes are planned in different parts of the world. A training programme in this series has been held in Amman, Jordan, on 20-22 April 1999. Similar workshops are planned for the CIS Region (Irkutsk, 13-15 July 1999) at the invitation of the Russian Administration. Training programmes are also planned for the Africa Region in collaboration with the UNDP and the Asia-Pacific Region.

17.   The main objectives of the training programme are to:

- Share information and exchange experiences about conducting tests at – component, cluster and service levels; and inter-carrier testing within a region and other regions;
- Provide operators with the background and methodology on how to develop contingency and business continuity plans, and demonstrate these through practical workshops designed specifically for this purpose; and
- Provide a forum for discussion between the operators and major suppliers and facilitate information exchange on the compliance status of products and systems and contingency plans.

BDT/World Bank Report on situation in Sub-Saharan Africa

18.   As part of the activities highlighting the needs and specific situation of developing countries, BDT and the World Bank's Information for Development (*infoDev*) Programme commissioned a study covering 46 African countries of sub-Saharan Africa entitled "Impact of the millennium bug on telecommunications in sub-Saharan Africa". The study estimated the monetary and other resource requirements to upgrade or replace network elements, operating systems, management systems, telex and mobile networks, in order to achieve Y2K compliance.

19.   The objective of the study was to answer the question as to the resource requirements of the Year 2000 compliance programme in telecommunication with a view to raising funds on an emergency basis for the Year 2000 remediation in the telecommunications sector in sub-Saharan Africa. This study is being considered by the World Bank and other agencies with a view to raising the resources required for maintaining the most critical elements of the telecommunication infrastructure in the region.

Expert Support

20.   Requests for expert inputs in launching and managing Year 2000 programmes have been received from several Administrations. Informal inquiries suggest that more requests can be expected in the near future. The following table provides the details of the expert missions.

Administration	Expert	Dates	Comments
1. Senegal	Ms. G. Govier (UK)	5-14 November 1998	1 and ½ weeks
2. Yemen	Dr. A. Abu-El-Haija (Jordan)	20 Feb- 24 March 1999	5 weeks
3. Libya	Mr. W. Skowronski (South Africa)	25-30 April 1999	1 week
4. Mali	Mr. M. Marczak (South Africa)	7-27 June 1999	3 weeks
5. Togo	Mr. M. Marczak (South Africa)	28 June -11 July 1999	2 weeks
6. Yemen	Dr. A. Abu-El-Haija (Jordan)	12-31 June 1999	3 week follow-up
7. ASETA	Mr. H. Nilsson (Sweden)	15-19 June 1999	½ week Business Continuity workshop
8. Mauritania	Mr. Hasnouvi and Mr. Saad(Morocco)	1 July -8 July 1999	2 person weeks
9. Libya	Mr. O. Hasan (Jordan)	July-August, 1999	2 week follow-up
10. Poland	Mr. H. Nilsson (Sweden)	August, 1999	1 week

21.   A delegation of the experts of the Year 2000 Task Force will be visiting the People's Republic of China and India for consultation and discussions with operators and administrations on aspects of testing and business continuity planning. The visits are planned for August – September 1999.

22.   In view of the likely demand for assistance over the next few months, BDT has appealed to operators with established programmes to provide expert resources for short periods to be deployed in developing countries. So far, the BDT has provided expert inputs to the tune of about 20 expert weeks to nine countries. While it is difficult to accurately estimate likely requirements that may arise in the future, in certain scenarios a demand approaching 40 person years over the next year can be expected. The growing list of countries requiring assistance and the limited resources of expertise available may become a bottleneck. BDT is seeking more support from those countries and operators that are more advanced and have well-established programmes in place.

Partnership and Collaboration

23.   The BDT Year 2000 project is carried out with the involvement and cooperation of the experts of the ITU Year 2000 Task Force and all segments of the telecommunication industry - operators and suppliers. Experts gave generously of their time and expertise by participating in the workshops and subsequently providing advice.

24.   Significant and highly valued in-kind contributions came from the Government of Australia, British Telecommunications, Bell South International, Cable & Wireless, Deutsche Telekom, INMARSAT, INTELSAT, South Africa Telkom and Telia. The Administrations of South Africa, Morocco, Egypt, Australia, Brazil, the Russian Federation, Poland and Jordan provided support and facilities for the organization of workshops.

25.   The project benefits from extensive collaboration with international organizations such as the World Bank, UNDP and regional telecommunication organizations such as ASETA and APT and RCC.

26.   The project received financial contributions to the tune of USD 474000 as of 15 June 1999. Voluntary contributions have been received from British Telecommunications, Cable & Wireless Optus, Deutsche Telekom AG, INTELSAT, INMARSAT, LM Ericsson, and Telstra. Annex 1 contains details of contributions received or pledged. It is expected that this figure is likely to increase in the near future.

27.   Voluntary contributions are placed in a separate project account and the contributory sponsors are provided with periodic progress reports.

Conclusions

28.   BDT Year 2000 project activities are carried out in conjunction with the ITU Year 2000 Task Force, and in close collaboration with the Information for Development Programme of the World Bank, UNDP and with the involvement of all segments of the telecommunication industry. The project received substantial voluntary financial contributions and in-kind contributions. In the run up to millennium, BDT activities will focus on:
- Providing technical assistance in remediation, testing, contingency planning and business continuity;
- Facilitating information flow; and
- Secondment of experts to assist in managing and evaluating the Year 2000 compliance programmes.

Annex 1

Year 2000 Project: Financial Contributions

Organization/Agency	Amount of Contribution (In US Dollars)
British Telecom	35,000
Cable & Wireless Optus	35,000
Deutsche Telekom AG	35,000
INTELSAT	50,000
LM Ericsson	100,000
Telstra	15,000
infoDev Programme, The World Bank	89,000
INMARSAT	15,000 (Africa Workshops September 1998)
Commonwealth Secretariat	5,000 (Pretoria Workshop September 1998)
TOTAL	**379,000**
UNDP (Africa Business Continuity Workshops) UNDP (Africa Technical Assistance)	95,000 To be determined*
TOTAL	**474,000 +**

* ITU and UNDP will share expert mission costs to assist telecommunication operators in Africa.

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