



Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)

**Third Meeting of the Telecommunication
Development Advisory Group (TDAG)
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Director of BDT

**PARTICIPATION OF COUNTRIES, IN PARTICULAR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES,
IN THE WORK OF THE THREE ITU SECTORS**

1 Introduction

1.1 At its second meeting on 13-14 September 1999, the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG) considered two documents (Documents 1/057 and 1/057(Add.1)) submitted to it by the study groups. In the report of the meeting (Document TDAG-2/23), it is stated that: "Following numerous interventions which emphasized, amongst others, the need to add a training component to the work of the study groups and to establish groups or networks of experts on study group questions, including one intervention which proposed reducing the number of study group meetings between world telecommunication development conferences from four to two, **TDAG recommended that the two documents mentioned above, along with an assessment of them by the Director, be submitted to the next TDAG.**"

1.2 Furthermore, by Resolution 5, WTDC-98 instructed the Director of BDT, in close collaboration with the Directors of the other two Bureaux, "to consider and implement the best ways and means to assist developing countries, and in particular least developed countries, in preparing for and participating actively in the work of the three Sectors".

Accordingly, this document:

- 1) consolidates all the proposals relating in particular to the participation of developing countries in the work of ITU-D study groups; and
 - 2) proposes additional measures to respond to all the other aspects of WTDC-98 Resolution 5.
- 1.3 TDAG is invited to examine the proposals contained in this document.

2 Strengthening the participation of developing countries in the work of ITU-D study groups

Proposed actions

2.1 Financing the participation of developing countries

Some developing countries are unable to finance their participation in the work of the study groups.

In general, BDT only finances the participation of LDCs. It is proposed that, within the limits of available budgetary resources, the participation of experts from developing countries also be financed.

Such financing would be subject to the following conditions:

- 1) Countries requesting a fellowship shall, for each Question selected, designate a standing active participant. This continuity in countries' representation would ensure that its delegate follows the work of the Question more closely and, hence, makes a more effective contribution to the discussion, both orally and in writing.
- 2) The standing representative of the country requesting a fellowship will be required to submit a relevant written contribution to the work of the ITU-D study groups concerned **as from the second such fellowship request** in order to participate in a meeting of the study groups.

2.2 Training activities

2.2.1 A special item might be placed on the agendas of the study group meetings identifying a subject (or subjects) of current interest to developing countries.

The selected topics will then be discussed at subsequent study group meetings during one-hour or two-hour information sessions (including the screening of videos on existing technology), depending on the importance of the subject. This practice has already commenced.

2.2.2 If such information meetings are deemed insufficient, knowledge-building seminars should be organized, on the proposal of the study group concerned, five months before the study group meetings. This activity will rely, as far as possible, on the centres of excellence, in conjunction with partners from the private sector.

2.2.3 In BDT, the focal points for the VAP programmes who are responsible for follow-up of study group Questions and implementation of the Valletta Action Plan (VAP) will be asked to inform the study group secretariat of any forum (seminar, workshop, etc.) organized on topics of current interest. Rapporteurs, co-rapporteurs, associate rapporteurs and active participants as well as staff concerned by the topics discussed during the forums in question will be informed and invited to participate.

2.2.4 A list of relevant recent publications that might be of interest to the study groups will be posted on the web. This may be taken care of by the focal points for the VAP programmes, having due and strict regard to copyright.

2.2.5 Finally, it is recommended that, at regional meetings, decision-makers be made aware of the importance of the study groups, thus encouraging them in turn to release their experts to participate in study group meetings.

2.3 Mechanism for regional coordination and exchange - Regional and subregional meetings

2.3.1 The regional coordination mechanism should enable the regions to collaborate and harmonize their viewpoints on subjects of importance for the region.

2.3.2 The possibility of implementing such a mechanism has been put to all the regions. The Africa, Asia-Pacific and Arab States regions have already responded favourably to the suggestion of organizing regional preparatory meetings in order to establish such mechanisms.

2.3.3 Role of ITU-D study group chairpersons and vice-chairpersons

These coordination mechanisms could be led by the chairpersons and vice-chairpersons, as members of the study groups and representatives of the regions therein. They would work together with the members of the region in order to ensure that regional needs and concerns are reflected in the work of the study groups through written or oral contributions. This aspect of the chairpersons' and vice-chairpersons' role could be developed in greater detail in the different regions.

2.4 Establishment of subregional/regional groups of experts

Groups of experts could be set up at the regional or subregional levels to address specific study group Questions and prepare quality contributions. Direct contributions by the regions to the work of the study groups could thus be envisaged.

Financing of the experts' participation will be examined in line with § 2.1 above.

2.5 Work programme

On the basis of the recommendations adopted by the two study groups, a work programme will be put forward by BDT, in agreement with the chairpersons and vice-chairpersons. The programme will be annual and will be established at the latest in the month of October preceding the year of its application.

2.6 Use of computer technology

The use of computer technology will be promoted by creating discussion centres on the Questions assigned to the study groups using electronic mail or the web.

Acting on Resolution 66 (Rev. Minneapolis, 1998) of the Plenipotentiary Conference on documents and publications of the Union, BDT has put forward proposals to promote and facilitate the efficient use by developing countries, and in particular LDCs, of ITU documents and publications on the web. These proposals are set out in Document TDAG-3/8, which will be examined by TDAG at its March 2000 meeting.

2.7 Periodicity of ITU-D study group meetings

The question was raised of reducing the number of meetings of each study group between WTDCs from four to two.

Cutting down the number of ITU-D study group meetings would certainly reduce the financial burden on developing countries in respect of participation in the meetings, but would it improve efficiency and effectiveness?

With annual meetings, all the rapporteur groups are able to meet, ensure due coordination of their activities and submit the results of their work (reports, recommendations, etc.) for approval by plenary meetings of the study groups. In order to obtain the same quality of results with fewer meetings, then in the (two-year) interval between meetings study of the Questions would have to be pursued by e-mail or correspondence.

Is everything in place in the Development Sector for Questions to be studied by e-mail over a two-year period? Would a reduction in the number of study group meetings at this juncture help to improve efficiency? In our opinion, any discussion of these fundamentally important issues relating to the functioning of the study groups in this document, which focuses on the problem of developing country participation in the work of the study groups, could only be superficial.

This issue should to our mind be taken up within the framework of the reform work under way in ITU, and particularly BDT, or should be referred to the Working Group on the structure and working methods of ITU-D study groups.

2.8 Conclusion

This approach, if adopted, could enable countries which so desire to become more actively involved in the work of the ITU-D study groups.

3 Participation of developing countries in the work of the three ITU Sectors

Apart from the specific measures proposed for the ITU-D study groups, the following arrangements could help to strengthen developing country participation in the work of the three ITU Sectors.

3.1 Fellowships

Fellowships have enabled representatives of the least developed countries to participate in activities of particular interest to developing countries.

Fellowships are already funded from the BDT budget under the implementation of WTDC-98 Resolution 9 on participation of countries, particularly developing countries, in frequency spectrum management; for some ITU-T and ITU-R study group meetings; and for conference/assembly preparatory meetings in the regions. The ITU regional offices provide essential support in this regard for the organization of such preparatory meetings.

3.2 Circulation of information

Every opportunity should be taken at meetings, seminars, etc. to inform participants of work in progress in the other Sectors which is considered important for the Development Sector.

3.3 Encourage and facilitate efficient utilization of ITU documents and publications on the web

Effective access for developing countries to information posted on the web will serve to expand their knowledge of issues in the changing telecommunication environment and hence enhance their participation in the work of the Union. Proposals on this subject are put forward in a separate document.
