



**Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)**

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**WORKING GROUP ON ITU REFORM**

Comments on the Working Group on ITU Reform refer **only to those aspects concerning the ITU Development Sector**. Further, the process of gathering contributions has only just begun in Canada. These comments should therefore be regarded as preliminary and subject to amendment. The large number of contributions to the first Reform Group meeting in Geneva has been noted. These have not, to this point, been fully analyzed.

**1. ITU Mandate: Products and Services**

The rapidly changing environment in the world of telecommunications and information technology (ICTs) leads naturally to a debate on the mandate of the ITU. This is a particular problem for the Development Sector where the ITU finds itself increasingly drawn into the broader aspects of development, which lie squarely in the mandates of other UN agencies. Many of these areas (tele-health, tele-education) use telecommunications as an integral part of their services, but are not fundamentally telecommunications. There are basically two options:

- i) Change the mandate of the ITU to encompass these areas;
- ii) Leave the mandate unchanged and partner with other agencies to achieve results.

Changing the mandate of the ITU involves modifying the Constitution and Convention. These will raise time-consuming and difficult questions around which it will be impossible to reach a consensus. Moreover, once started, the work will never be finished if the intention is to try to keep up with the rate of change.

On the other hand, partnering with other agencies has its difficulties. Results cannot be guaranteed and often the mandates of organizations cannot be truly harmonized.

**Preliminary conclusion**

To avoid both these problems it is concluded that the mandate of the ITU should be left basically unchanged. Moreover, the ITU should restrict itself to its mandate and not attempt to become

authoritative in areas beyond telecommunications, except in partnership arrangements where the partner would be responsible for “delivery”.

This conclusion has two serious implications:

- The ITU-D will need to be rigorous in refusing to take on activities outside its mandate (except through partnerships);
- The ITU-D will need to learn to “partner” and to allocate adequate resources to ensure successful partnerships.

## **2. Management and Structure of the Union**

No real progress in the Structure and Management of the ITU can be achieved until the question of the elected officials is addressed. The credibility of the Union suffers because of the overarching concern with elections and re-elections. A model similar to other UN agencies with only one position (Secretary General) being elected would allow further reforms to take place which would enhance the management of the Union.

From the viewpoint of the Development Sector the issue of overlap or collaboration with other sectors of the Union seems to have been resolved in recent years. However, if there were to be a new sector, such as a Policy Sector, established, there would need to be close coordination in determining its mandate to ensure consistency with the mandate of the ITU-D.

Other management issues in the ITU can be resolved within the present structure as has been so clearly demonstrated by the Director, Radiocommunication Sector.

## **3. Finance and Budgetary Issues**

As long as the Development Sector role is restricted to a catalytic or synergistic role, CHF 32 Million per year (Yr 2000 value) should be adequate to carry out these functions. It is necessary that the BDT vigorously resist taking on new functions for which there is neither budget or need. With respect to the latter, there needs to be rigorous and firm decisions taken as to when projects or initiatives are curtailed. For example, the proposal to open up opportunities for participation in the ITU activities for NGOs or expanded involvement of the private sector should be stopped if no practical progress can be made.