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Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)

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## Note by the Director

### Contribution on the Review and Improvement of the Management, Functioning and Structure of the ITU

#### Introduction

The purpose of this contribution is to seek the assistance and views of TDAG participants on a certain number of issues which they may wish to consider and comment on, with regard to reviewing and recommending improvements to the organisation and working methods of the ITU-D Sector.

This is in keeping with Resolution 74 of the Plenipotentiary Conference (Minneapolis, 1998), which instructed the Directors of the Bureaux "to seek advice from their Sector Advisory Groups on the further changes for improving the organisation and working methods of their respective Sectors that are necessary to ensure that ITU is able to meet its objective as set forth in the Constitution and developed in the strategic plan".

In addressing the question of improvements to the ITU-D sector, TDAG members should also take into account the ITU Secretary General's often stated five priorities and major challenges facing the ITU, and especially the one targetted to development activities: to transform our development activities to support the growth of and access to multimedia information networks in developing countries.

#### A- The ITU-D mission and functions

As stated in Article 1 of the Constitution as well as in the Union's Strategic Plan 1999-2003 (Resolution 71 of Minneapolis), the ITU has historically had a dual responsibility in development matters: 1- as a specialized agency of the United Nations, the ITU-D has carried out programmes and activities, such as those established at the Buenos Aires and Valletta Conferences, and provided technical cooperation and assistance to developing countries, and, 2- as an executing agency for implementing projects under the United Nations development system or other funding arrangements, the ITU-D has executed numerous development projects with funds provided mainly by sources outside of the regular ITU budget, such as the UNDP and various funds-in-trust mechanisms. **The membership may wish to comment on whether increased emphasis should be placed on one or the other of these responsibilities?**

As also reflected in the ITU Strategic Plan, the ITU-D, in fulfilling its mission, covers five major areas of telecommunication development: **telecommunication sector reform, technologies,**

**management, finance and human resources.** The ITU-D mission is supported by four main modes of action by which the sector carries out its work: **direct assistance (including project execution), resource development and mobilization, partnerships and information sharing,** which are all reflected in the organizational structure of the BDT. **Has the experience of the last two years, since Valetta, yielded the expected results for the membership? If so, is there a need to build on and reinforce the delivery of ITU-D activities? If not, what changes should be contemplated to redress the situation? Is the organizational structure of the BDT, and its governance, the most suitable for the effective and efficient delivery of the ITU-D products and services?**

Another question may merit consideration: **Are the needs of the members properly understood, and do the ITU-D activities truly respond to the development needs of the membership?** Finally and in light of the changing telecommunication environment, **should development activities continue to be confined to telecommunication development?** There has been a clear change in the development paradigm at ITU, with a gradual transition from network development to service development and then *to telecommunications for development*, as evidenced in the wide variety of resolutions and questions dealt with in ITU: Internet issues, electronic commerce, social and cultural development, gender equality, etc. **In the Global Information Society, should BDT continue to focus its attention primarily on telecommunication issues or should it increasingly reflect the trend towards information and communication technologies (ICT)?**

#### **B- Working methods of the ITU-D**

Since February 1999, in order to improve the working methods of the ITU-D, a number of measures have been implemented, such as the reorganization of the Bureau, the strengthening of regional presence through increased delegation of authority to the regions and staffing of vacant positions in the regions, and the enhancement of accountability and transparency through the operational planning process.

**The membership may wish to comment on measures to improve the structure and working methods of the study groups, on proposals to improve the participation of developing countries in the work of the study groups, and on means to reduce the cost and volume of documentation.**

Undoubtedly, a number of other items could be considered to improve the working methods of ITU-D, for example in the areas of enhanced document exchange capabilities, the improvement of publication mechanisms through a wider use of information technology, publication mechanisms, the establishment of a resource mobilization strategy to increase funding for development projects, and the improvement of the implementation capacity and process of the BDT.

#### **C- Functioning of the ITU-D**

Under the ITU Constitution, the Telecommunication Development Sector functions through:

- World and Regional Telecommunication Development Conferences
- Telecommunication Development Study Groups
- the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group
- the Telecommunication Development Bureau

## 1- Development conferences

**a) Objectives:** The Valetta World Telecommunication Development Conference noted similarities between the objectives of WTDCs and those of the World Telecommunication Policy Forum. In addition to its current functions which include the establishment of “work programmes and guidelines for defining telecommunication development questions and priorities” and the provision of “direction and guidance for the work programme of the Telecommunication Development Sector”, **should the WTDCs be increasingly used as a global framework for the consideration of global cross-sectoral issues?**

**b) Functioning:** The limitations of the functioning of the WTDC were evident in the Valetta Conference. Could the World Telecommunication Policy Forum offer a relevant model to be considered for the functioning of a WTDC, given that a WTDC does not produce Final Acts and its decisions are not legally binding. Some thought was given to this subject in a contribution to the 1999 session of the Council (Document C99/60), which discussed the replacement of regional development conferences (RTDC-01) by a series of regional preparatory meetings for the next World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-02). These preparatory meetings provide the ITU membership with a good opportunity to develop and apply a new organisational framework, built around thematic workshops and on close consultation with ITU regional offices, the regional telecommunication organizations, the private sector and other development-related entities. **The membership may wish to comment on this possible new approach for World and Regional development conferences, including the possibility of organizing WTDCs along the lines of Telecom fora?**

**c) Programming:** One of the main functions of Development Conferences is to establish work programmes. The limited resources of the BDT not only make it impossible to respond to all the requests from developing countries, but they also make priority setting extremely difficult. In order to avoid dispersing these resources too thinly, **is there not a need to establish a mechanism for aggregating requests, on the basis of clearly established parameters (for example, regional versus national projects, policy and regulatory matters versus infrastructure projects, etc.)?**

As mentioned above, the provision of direct assistance to developing countries represents a major component of BDT activity. Comments would be welcomed on the emphasis which the BDT should be placing in this particular area. **For example, what priority should be given in the future to responding to requests of direct assistance from developing countries.** These requests continue to increase from year to year, at times to the detriment of planned programme activities? Because of the limited funding made available to the BDT, it is becoming increasingly difficult to balance the requests for direct and ad-hoc assistance and the implementation of programmes adopted by the World Development Conferences.

In principle, the BDT programmes, such as the six Valetta Action Plan Programmes, all target the same fundamental objective, that of providing universal access to telecommunication infrastructures and services and information technologies. **The question could arise as to whether or not the organizational vertical structure adopted within the BDT for the implementation of these programmes is the most suitable one. Cross fertilization, team work and enhanced sharing of information may be more appropriate.**

## 2-The Telecommunication Development Study Groups

Under the Constitution, these study groups are set up by World Telecommunication Development Conferences (CV209). They are restricted in number and are set up for a limited period of time, having regard to available resources (CV214). **Should these limitations continue to apply as time and requirements dictate, or should they be dispensed with?**

**Half way through the second study period may be an opportune moment to carry out an assessment of the work of the study groups.** Given the pace of technology and the changes in the telecommunication environment, **do the development study groups continue to meet the expectations of the Development Sector's members in terms of time, quality and usefulness?** In this regard, the concept of “focus groups” and other “strategic workshops” might pave the way towards a new approach that is more timely and cost effective. Another issue which could arise is the nature of questions to be studied. **Should they be more operational than they currently are, in order to maximize their potential to deliver quick, practical and implementable results? Should the mandate of the Group on the Structure and Working Methods of the Study Groups be extended in order to carry out the above-mentioned assessment?**

### **3- The Telecommunication Development Advisory Group**

Under the Geneva Convention, as amended by the Plenipotentiaries (Minneapolis,1998), participation in TDAG is now open to all Member States and Sector Members, as well as representatives of bilateral and multilateral cooperation and development aid agencies and financing institutions. This body continues to provide an advisory function to the Director. **Both Member States and Sector members may wish to provide comments on the experience gained in opening the group to the full ITU membership, on whether this new formula needs to be streamlined or not, on the frequency of annual meetings, and on the current functioning of the TDAG. A similar assessment could also be carried out on the role and the work of the TDAG Sub Group dealing with private sector issues. Should this entity continue to report to the TDAG or should it be an independent unit?**

### **D- Continued Strengthening of Regional presence**

In Resolution 25, the Plenipotentiary Conference (Minneapolis, 1998) resolved that the ITU regional presence needed to be strengthened, in order to maximize the benefits of regional presence for the whole of the Union's membership. While this matter is under ongoing consideration and implementation, and indeed the subject of annual reports to the Council, **the membership you may wish to provide its insight on progress achieved, lessons learned and additional measures which could be considered to further strengthen our regional presence.**

One of the objectives of Minneapolis Resolution 25 on regional presence is to achieve a better balance of work between headquarters and the regional offices. Without necessarily getting involved in the various detailed measures which could be considered in strengthening regional presence, **the question which could arise has to do with the distribution of functions among the headquarters and the regional offices. Would the regional offices be mainly responsible for the implementation of operational programme activities, and headquarters would be responsible, in essence, for providing the strategic direction, policy, research, information and coordination services required for effective implementation of our activities and projects?**

### **E- Relations with the Private Sector**

There have been over the years various initiatives aimed at enhancing the role of the private sector as a major stakeholder in ITU-D activities. The establishment of Programme 5 in the Valetta Action Plan, the creation of the TDAG Sub-group on private sector issues, the implementation of partnership arrangements with industry are all examples of the continuing importance and necessity to associate the private sector in ITU-D activities. While the BDT has recently experienced some successes in this area --as of the end of 1999, more than 200 companies were members of the ITU-D sector, and a growing number of major partnership agreements with industry are being implemented-- much more needs to be done. **Could enhanced transparency, cost effectiveness and accountability be achieved through financial mechanisms which would allow the private sector's contributions to be directly allocated to development activities?**

At Valletta, Malta the WTDC in 1998 established the Sub-group dealing with private sector issues. **Is it not timely for the Sub-group to assess, from a private sector perspective, the usefulness and pertinence of ITU-D activities? Sector Members may wish to comment on their participation in these activities, with a view to recommending appropriate measures to further enhance their role as partners of the Development Sector. Should the Sub-group be requested to report on this matter to the next TDAG meeting in October of this year.**

#### **F- Relations with international organizations and other regional telecommunication organizations**

The development of strategic alliances with international organizations, in order to address the challenges resulting from the advent of the information society, needs to be strengthened if the ITU is to succeed in forging closer ties with regional and sub-regional telecommunication organizations, as stated in the ITU Strategic Plan. **The membership may wish to comment on specific mechanisms which could be implemented in forging alliances and enhancing collaboration among the international stakeholders of the information society.**

#### **G- Conclusion**

It may be useful to recall that, in accordance with Minneapolis Resolution 74, the Directors of the Bureaux have been instructed not only to seek the advice of their sector advisory groups on changes to improve the organization and working methods of their respective Sectors, but also to report, with the assistance of their advisory groups, to the forthcoming sessions of the Council. The Working Group of Member States and Sector Members established by Council to review the management, functioning and structure of the Union has also been invited to take into account these reports.

The issues and questions raised in this contribution, which are not exhaustive, are intended to assist the ITU membership in dealing with the review exercise called for in Resolution 74. **Since this matter will continue at least until the 2001 session of the Council, Member States and Sector members are invited to develop recommendations on the review exercise, and provide their input on this matter to the above-mentioned Working Group on the review of the management and structure of the Union.**