

Report of the ITU Regional Development Forum 2008: “Bridging the ICT Standardization Gap in Developing Countries”

Damascus, Syria 20-22 (a.m.) July 2008

1 Venue

An ITU Regional Development Forum on "Bridging the ICT Standardization Gap in Developing Countries" was held in Damascus Syria from 20 to 22 July 2008 kindly hosted by the Syrian Telecommunication Establishment (STE). The meeting was attended by 53 delegates and participants from 13 Arab countries, the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council and ARISPA. Mr. Nabil Kisrawi, from Syrian Administration kindly accepted to moderate all the sessions.

2 Opening and ITU Sectors overviews

The welcome Addresses on behalf of ITU was given by Mr. Malcolm Johnson, Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau (TSB), and on behalf of Syrian Telecom Establishment (STE), by Mr. Nazem Bahsas, Chairman of STE. The first day was dedicated to ITU Sectors activities presentation in connection with the standardization gap.

Mr. Malcolm Johnson presented an overview of ITU-T activities and its organization, underlined the strength provided by its membership structure, its fast, transparent, flexible and consensual procedures and its IPR policy shared by main other SDOs (ISO and IEC), and indicated the strategic directions followed by ITU-T in promoting public/private partnership, continuously adapting to market needs, striving for a stronger participation of developing countries and engagement with academia, in order to maintain its preeminence.

After having defined the standardization gap, Mr. Sami Trabulsi, head of EP Division in TSB, presented ITU-T views on the sequence of steps that should be achieved to overcome the gap. Then he presented the "Questionnaire" that should be completed by ITU-T and ITU-D sector members as an input to WTSA-08 in order to better understand developing countries needs in the field of standardization. Date limit for answers was extended by TSAG to the end of September 2008.

Dr. Valery Timofeev, Director of the Radiocommunication Bureau (BR) welcomed the Forum participants and presented an overview of Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R) standardization activities, underlining that spectrum regulation is a necessity in the first place, that gave rise to two types of standards, the mandatory regulations, that have an international treaty status, and the voluntary ones, that are the ITU-R Recommendations. He stressed the role of the regional groups and conferences in the establishment of Radio Regulations (mandatory standard having international treaty status). He also presented a quick review of ITU-R structure, products, future aims and ITU-R activities in overcoming standardization gap.

Mr Alexandre Vassiliev, ITU-R SG 7 Counsellor, described the structure of ITU-R, its study groups and their mandates, its working methods, radiocommunication standards and other publications developed by ITU-R and the main achievements in recent years. Then after having explained the cooperation framework between ITU-T and ITU-R, he presented a quick review of the multiple fields where this cooperation is widely and successfully practiced.

Mr. Yury Grin, Deputy Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), conveyed greetings from the Director of the BDT, Mr Sami Al Basheer Al Morshid and described the specific role of Development Sector in ITU. He presented ITU-D structure, missions and priorities, and the

resulting programmes, activities and initiatives. He concluded by insisting on the benefits of becoming member of ITU.

Mr. Riccardo Passerini, head of (Technology and Network Development) TND unit in BDT, gave the details of ITU-D study groups, their working methods, Questions under study and the major related output Question by Question.

Finally, Mr Souheil Marine, Rapporteur of ITU-D SG Q19-1/2 (Strategy for migration from existing networks to next generation networks for developing countries), expanded on the specific case of Question 19/2, and underlined the dramatic lack of contributions from the developing countries. He described the technical aspects and the taxonomy of the migration, the different achievements, and invited membership to actively answer the questionnaire distributed in April 2008 about broadband access.

3 Development trends in ITU-T

The following sessions were dedicated to a presentation of some study group activities by ITU-T experts.

Dr. Sherif Guinena, vice chairman of ITU-T SG2, described the activities of SG2 in particular the different identifiers used in numbering, naming and addressing (NNA), and the respective Recommendations. He also described the challenges resulting from the interworking of those identifiers in the frame of the convergence of networks and services and multiplicity of providers.

Dr. Kishik Park, chairman of ITU-T SG3, described the evolution and application of tariff principles in the frame of emerging technologies, the structure of SG3 and its achievements since WTSA-04, and underlined the contribution of SG3 to International Telecommunication Regulations (ITR) work. He also indicated the specific issues forwarded by SG3 to WTSA-08 for its consideration.

Mr. Roberto Pomponi, chairman of ITU-T SG5, described its three main objectives: protection of telecommunication installations against electromagnetic disturbances, such as those from lightning; protection of telecommunication personnel and users of telecommunication networks against current and voltages used in telecommunications networks; and to produce standards that protect telecommunication personnel and the general public from electromagnetic fields generated by telecommunication installations. He highlighted recent work on EMC of home networking technology. Results are expressed through K-series Recommendations, Directives and handbooks.

Mr. Mike Harrop, Rapporteur Q4/17 (communications systems security project), described the ITU-T network security initiative, the roadmap for security work in ITU-T, the role of the different question groups, and the corresponding achievements, including Recommendations, manual, compendium and the security standards roadmap. He underlined the importance of security and of the collaboration with the other SDOs on this matter. He reminded of the existence of a survey on the needs of developing countries in the field of cybersecurity and invited membership to respond to this survey.

Mr. Leo Lehmann, Rapporteur Q29/16 (mobility for multimedia systems and services), described the multimedia work in ITU-T, and the main achievements and future works in video coding, speech coding and conferencing protocols.

Mr. Arshey Odedra, ITU-T SG11 Counsellor, presented the multiple activities of ITU-T Study Groups in the field of NGN, the coordination structure, and the corresponding achievements.

Mr. Souheil Marine described the economic aspects of migration to NGN, describing the different possible scenarios: outside to inside and inside to outside, and the related economics, with a special attention to developing countries case.

Finally, Mr. Leo Lehmann reported on ITU-T activities related to accessibility, and how physical disabilities should be taken into account from the right beginning in order to integrate them in services and equipments. He also expanded on the related e-health issue.

4 Major issues for WTSA-08

Mr. Malcolm Johnson concluded these presentations by recalling that WTSA-08 will be preceded immediately by a Global Standards Symposium with high level speakers, and will have an associated exhibition. He also recalled the extensive preparation with Forums and preparatory meetings organized in all regions.

He indicated that WTSA-08 is expected to lead to a reduced number of Study Groups, more focus on developing countries' participation and need for regional groups, and more remote participation to be built into the working methods. Revised and new Resolutions and Recommendations should take up to date ITU-T working methods. Flexibility new structures like Global Standards Initiatives (GSIs) and Joint Coordination Activities (JCA) should be better defined.

He recalled that WTSA-08 will elect study group chairmen and vice chairmen, indicated the election procedure and qualification criteria, and invited candidatures.

He recalled the other expected decisions on work program, bridging the standardization gap, ICTs and climate change, ITU-T technology watch function, and increased academic participation.

He indicated the possible new initiatives for a new category of member for academia, for reduced membership fees for private companies from developing countries, for addressing the proliferation of standardization bodies, for improving collaboration with research institutes, for climate change, and for conformance and interoperability testing.

Then Mr. Arshey Odedra gave some practical information on WTSA-08 venue.

Finally, Mr. Sami Trabulsi and Mr. Nabil Kisrawi reported on the outcome of TSAG meeting of July 2008 in relation with the preparation of WTSA-08.

5 Meeting conclusions

In the discussions based on the presentations there was support for the following initiatives:

- interoperability of equipment and services conforming to ITU Recommendations and the ITU Mark
- reduction of the ITU-T membership fees to the same level as the ITU-D for the private sector in developing countries
- proposed action of ITU-T on the major problem of the large amount of electronic waste which is negatively affecting the environment and public health (how can it be managed and recycled)
- the contributions of the ITU-T and ITU-D to cybersecurity
- the economic impediments to bridging the digital divide in developing countries
- The ITU Development Forums will be held in each Region during 2009 possibly back to back with the Regional Preparatory meetings for WTDC-10. The countries have been invited in making proposal for the content and topics to be dealt with the Forum that will be held in the Arab Region

6 Closing of meeting

On behalf of ITU Malcolm Johnson Director TSB thanked all the participants, the government of Syria, and in particular the Syrian Telecommunications Establishment, for the generous hosting of this Forum. The arrangements and facilities have been excellent, everything has worked well, and we will not forget the tremendous hospitality we have enjoyed.

He thanked his colleagues in the Radio, Development, and Telecommunication Standardization Sectors, and especially Mr Sami Trabulsi who has worked closely with Mr Nabil Kisrawi to organize this event. He thanked all the speakers and presenters, and of course the interpreters. He thanked especially his good friend Mr Nabil Kisrawi who has applied his famous energy, knowledge and experience to the success of this Forum.

The fact that there were more than 13 Arab countries attending this meeting shows the increasing extent of interest of countries in this region to participate in ITU's standardization activities. He was sure that it has been a very informative few days, and by listening to the presentations, discussing with colleagues from other countries, and by sharing experiences, we are going a long way towards bridging the standardization gap.

Excellent ideas that have been generated, not only in the Forum but also in the discussions over coffee, lunch and dinner that prove an excellent basis for consideration of common proposals in the WTSA Preparatory Meeting which will start later today.

Mr Nazem Bahsas, Director General of STE thanked ITU and all participants. He was very pleased to see the success of the Forum. It had been a pleasure to host the event and he was sure it would help the regional preparations. He wished all participants a safe journey home and those staying for the Arab preparatory meeting every success in their deliberations.
