

# World Telecommunication Development Conference

Resolution 7 (Valletta, 1998)

## Gender and Telecommunication Policy in Developing Countries

The World Telecommunication Development Conference (Valletta, 1998),

*considering*

- a) the purposes of the Union as set out in Article 1 of the Constitution (Geneva, 1992) include promoting "the extension of the benefits of the new telecommunication technologies to all the world's inhabitants";
- b) the responsibility of ITU-D to facilitate and enhance telecommunication development by offering, organizing and coordinating technical cooperation and assistance activities;
- c) the Beijing Declaration - United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) - which seeks to ensure that women have equal access to information and communication as a means of furthering the advancement and empowerment of women and girls,

*recognizing*

- a) that telecommunications play a fundamental role in promoting social, political and economic development;
- b) that women in their multiple roles make a very important contribution to both social and economic life, particularly in the struggle against poverty in developing countries, and play a key role in shaping the attitudes, welfare and development of future generations;
- c) that full participation in policy and decision-making and access to telecommunication services will enable women and other groups who have been traditionally disadvantaged to derive benefits and make more effective contributions,

*further recognizing*

- a) that the inadequate deployment of telecommunication infrastructure in rural areas makes it particularly difficult for women in such areas to gain access to information and telecommunication services;
- b) that, while complex processes of convergence of technologies, liberalization and restructuring produce multiple impacts on employment in the telecommunication sector, e.g. creating jobs, demand for new skills and training, they may also lead to job losses when insufficient attention is paid to those needs;
- c) that making better use of human resources and skills of women significantly adds to the pool of talent which will be needed in the new information society;

d) that women constitute a substantial and often under-served consumer market for information and communication technologies,

*conscious*

a) that because of lack of access to alternative communications facilities and high illiteracy levels, women in developing countries rely on broadcasting media as their key source of information;

b) that women and children are frequently most vulnerable during emergencies, and would benefit from improved access to emergency telecommunication services,

*noting*

a) that there has been insufficient attention to understanding the impacts of telecommunication systems and technologies on women;

b) that there have been few ITU telecommunication projects which have incorporated the perspectives and needs of women,

*resolves*

1) to establish a task force on gender issues to facilitate, develop and take forward a range of activities aimed at:

a) ensuring that the benefits of telecommunications and the emerging information society are made available to all women and men in developing countries on a fair and equitable basis, (the terms of reference for the task force are attached);

b) encouraging the recruitment, employment, training and advancement of women throughout the telecommunication field,

2) to incorporate the results of the special sessions on gender issues in the Valletta Action Plan;

3) to integrate a gender perspective in the campaign for a universal right to communicate,

*instructs the Director of BDT*

1) to propose to the ITU Council the inclusion of a gender perspective in the ITU Strategic Plan;

2) to report back to the next world telecommunication development conference on the results and progress made by the task force;

3) transmit this Resolution to the 1998 Plenipotentiary Conference,

*further resolves that ITU-D*

1) should make a commitment to integrate a gender perspective in its policies and work programmes, including human resources development activities, study groups, seminars, conferences and workshops;

2) should work closely with the task force to implement its programmes expeditiously;

- 3) should extend its data collection activities, including the telecommunications indicator series, to provide gender-disaggregated statistics;
- 4) should act as an enabling force for the development of an active network between various types of organizations of women involved in the information and telecommunication fields, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs);
- 5) should support efforts to identify technical and financial resources to carry out the programmes of the task force on gender issues,

*also urges Member States, Sector Members and intergovernmental organizations*

- 1) to review and, as appropriate, revise their policies and practices to ensure that recruitment, employment, training and advancement of women and men are undertaken on a fair and equitable basis;
- 2) to facilitate the employment of women in the telecommunication field on an equitable basis, including at senior levels of responsibility in the telecommunication administrations, government and regulatory bodies, intergovernmental organizations and the private sector.