**MOD** ACP/22A11/1

RESOLUTION 37 (REV. Buenos Aires, 2017)

Bridging the digital divide

The World Telecommunication Development Conference (Buenos Aires, 2017),

recalling

*a)* Resolution 37 (Rev. Dubai, 2014) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC);

*b)* Resolution 50 (Rev. Dubai, 2014) of the WTDC, on the optimal integration of information and communication technologies;

*c)* Resolution 25 (Rev. Busan, 2014) of the Plenipotentiary Conference (PP), on the Strengthening the regional presence;

*d)* Resolution 135 (Rev. Busan, 2014) of the PP, on ITU’s role in the development of telecommunications/information communications technologies (ICT), in providing technical assistance and advice to developing countries and in implementing relevant national, regional and interregional projects;

*e)* Resolution 139 (Rev. Busan, 2014) of the PP, on the Use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies to bridge the digital divide and build an inclusive information society;

*f)* Resolution 200 (Busan, 2014) of the PP, on Connect 2020 Agenda for global telecommunication/information and communication technology development,

recognizing

*a)* that the telecommunication environment has undergone significant changes since WTDC‑14;

*b)* that development in telecommunication ICT has continued to reduce the cost of relevant equipment and services;

*c)* that numerous studies endorse the conclusion that investments in broadband infrastructure, applications and services contribute to sustainable and inclusive economic growth for all;

*d)* that many ITU Member States have adopted regulations dealing with telecommunication/ICT issues such as interconnection, determination of tariffs, universal service, etc., designed to bridge the digital divide at the national level;

*e)* that the introduction of national plans and projects in the provision of competitive telecommunication/ICT services and applications has also contributed to reducing costs to users and bridging the digital divide;

*f)* that it is necessary to coordinate the efforts of both the public and private sectors to ensure that opportunities arising from the information society yield benefits, especially for the disadvantaged;

*g)* that the integration models supported by the ITU Member States are an element that integrates, facilitates and does not exclude, one which takes into account the individual characteristics of all existing projects, respecting their autonomy and independence;

*h)* that the integration models propose ways to increase the profitability of existing infrastructure, to lower the cost of developing and implementing ICT projects and platforms, to provide for the sharing of expertise and skills, and to foster intra-regional and extra-regional technology transfers;

*i)* that there is still an ongoing need to create digital opportunities in developing countries, including the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition, taking advantage of the revolution that ICT has witnessed and is currently witnessing;

*j)* that various activities are being executed towards bridging the digital divide by many international and regional organizations, such as, in addition to ITU, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the United Nations Regional Commissions, the World Bank, the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT), the regional economic communities, the regional development banks and many others, and that such activity has increased following the conclusion of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the adoption of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, particularly in relation to implementation and follow-up;

*k)*  that the BYND2015 World Youth Summit participants, in the Declaration of Costa Rica 2013, called for equitable and universal access to ICTs, particularly for women and girls, as well as other groups marginalized by the digital divide, and called for the United Nations, the international community and all Member States to consider their words and put them into action,

considering

*a)* the role of the ITU, in particular the specific functions of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D);

*b)* the continuing disparity between those who have and those who do not have access to ICT, especially rural areas in many developing countries where telecommunications/ICT services and applications, particularly in relation to the Internet, are still not affordable to the majority of the people;

*c)* that many stakeholders in the public, private, academic, non-governmental organization and multilateral sectors are seeking to bridge this divide;

*d)* the progress accomplished in the implementation of the outcomes of Phases 1 and 2 of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS);

*e)* that each region, country and area should tackle its own specific issues regarding the digital divide, while stressing the importance of cooperation in this area at regional and international level in order to benefit from experience gained;

*f)* that many developing countries do not have the necessary basic infrastructure, long‑term plans, laws, appropriate regulations and such like in place for telecommunication/ICT development;

*g)* that the use of radiocommunication systems, in particular satellite systems, to provide access for local communities located in rural or remote areas without increased connection costs due to distance or other geographical characteristics is an extremely useful and cost-effective tool for bridging the digital divide;

*h)* that satellite broadband systems support communication solutions offering high connectivity, speed and reliability in both urban areas and rural and remote areas, and thus constitute a fundamental driver of economic and social development for countries and regions;

*i)* that the development of radiocommunication technologies and deployment of satellite systems enable sustainable and affordable access to information and knowledge, through the provision of communication services with high connectivity (broadband) and wide coverage (regional or global reach), which contribute significantly to bridging the digital divide, efficiently complementing other technologies and enabling countries to be connected directly, quickly and reliably,

bearing in mind

*a)* that this continuing difference in access to ICTs would lead to an extreme escalation of economic and social disparities, with negative impacts on the social and economic environment in the various regions excluded from the use of ICTs;

*b)* the interest shown by WSIS in ICT integration and the role of the three ITU Sectors in this regard;

*c)* the “Call to Action” of the Broadband Commission for Digital Development, to include ICT networks, services and applications as enablers of sustainable development,

further considering

*a)* that the distribution of the benefits brought about by the ICT revolution is not equitable between developing and developed countries, and between social categories within countries, taking into account the commitments of both phases of WSIS to bridge the digital divide and transform it into a digital opportunity;

*b)* that equitable access to information and the transition of the countries of the developing world into knowledge economies and into the information age will enhance their economic, social and cultural development, in implementation of the aims of the Geneva Plan of Action and Tunis Agenda;

*c)* that Goal 2 (Inclusiveness – Bridge the digital divide and provide broadband for all) of the strategic plan for the Union for 2016-2019 in Resolution 71 (Rev. Busan, 2014) of the PP, states that ITU will continue to be committed in the work to bridge the digital divide and enable the provision of broadband for all, so everyone can take advantage of its economic and social benefits;

*d)* that, in 2015, the United Nations General Assembly assessed the outcomes and implementation of both the Millennium Development Goals and the WSIS Tunis Agenda, and approved Resolution A/RES/70/1 on Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

confirms

the importance of approaches to funding for bridging the digital divide in the Geneva Plan of Action, the Tunis Agenda and the strategic plan for the Union and of their translation into equitable mechanisms for action, particularly in respect of issues related to Internet management, taking into consideration measures for promoting full gender equality, with due regard for people with specific needs, including persons with disabilities and age-related disabilities, youth and indigenous peoples, telecommunications/ICTs for disaster relief and mitigation, and the child online protection initiative,

undertakes

to carry out work from which all countries, especially the developing countries, may benefit, with a view to establishing international methods and specific mechanisms to strengthen international cooperation for bridging the digital divide, through connectivity solutions which reliable, sustainable and affordable access to ICTs,

resolves to request the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau

1 to continue to follow up the work pursuant to Resolution 8 (Rev. Dubai, 2014) of this conference in creating social connectivity indicators for the digital divide, standard indicators for each country and a single index, in cooperation with the competent organizations in the relevant United Nations agencies, using available statistics so that charts can be compiled to illustrate the current situation of the digital divide in each country and region;

2 to continue to encourage the adoption of necessary measures to implement regional projects to link all stakeholders, organizations and institutions of the various sectors in an ongoing relationship of cooperation in which information is disseminated over networks, so as to narrow the digital divide in line with the outputs of Phases 1 and 2 of WSIS, and to contribute and work towards the Connect 2020 Agenda;

3 to continue to advocate the advantages of developing low‑cost, high‑quality ICT products, that can be directly connected to the networks supporting the Internet service and applications;

4 to continue to assist in developing a user-awareness campaign in order to build user trust and confidence in ICT services and applications;

5 to ensure that special programmes under the ITU Centres of Excellence (CoE) continue to address the specific issue of ICT training for poverty alleviation, and to give top priority to these centres;

6 to encourage innovation and the use of new and emerging technologies; and the development of business models or other innovative ways to help telecommunications operators in reducing costs and thereby bridging the digital divide;

7 to continue to identify key ICT applications in rural areas and to cooperate with specialized organizations with a view to developing a standardized user‑friendly content format that overcomes the barrier of literacy and language;

8 to continue to assist in reducing access costs by encouraging manufacturers to develop appropriate technology scalable to broadband applications and having a low operating and maintenance cost, this having been adopted as a key objective of the Union as a whole and ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU‑D) in particular;

9 to assist and support developing countries in researching and assessing difficulties and challenges in the operation and maintenance of multipurpose community telecentres in rural and remote areas, with a view to advising developing countries on models of multipurpose community telecentres, including digital inclusion, in rural and remote areas adapted to local circumstances;

10 to encourage members to provide ITU with ICT rural experiences, which can then be put on the ITU‑D website;

11 to continue to assist the Member States and Sector Members in developing a pro-competition policy and regulatory framework for ICTs, including online services and electronic commerce, as well as capacity building in connectivity and accessibility, taking into account the specific needs of women, marginal, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups;

12 to ensure BDT continues to play a central role in this initiative and collaborate with ITU Member States closely, through the ITU regional offices, to implement relevant programmes and projects. This is in addition to maintaining an active communication channel between the strategic stakeholders;

13 to continue to encourage development of broadcast-mode methods for promoting ICT uses in rural areas;

14 to continue to help in promoting greater participation of women as well as persons with disabilities and specific needs in ICT initiatives, particularly in rural areas;

15 to promote the implementation of studies or projects and activities, in collaboration with the ITU Radiocommunication Sector (ITU‑R), with a view, on the one hand, to complementing national radiocommunication systems, including satellite systems, and, on the other, to increasing knowledge and capacities thereof, in order to achieve optimum utilization of the orbit spectrum resource, with the aim of stimulating the development and coverage of satellite broadband for bridging the digital divide;

16 to analyse the adoption of measures for collaboration with ITU‑R, in order to support studies, projects or systems and, at the same time, to implement joint activities which seek to build capacities in efficient use of the orbit/spectrum resource for the provision of satellite services, with a view to achieving affordable access to satellite broadband and facilitating network connectivity between different areas, countries and regions, especially in the developing countries,

invites Member States

1 to consider promoting relevant policies to foster public and private investment in the development and construction of radiocommunication systems, including satellite systems, in their countries and regions, and to consider including the use of such systems in their national and/or regional broadband plans, as an additional tool that will help to bridge the digital divide and meet telecommunication/ICT needs, especially in the developing countries;

2 to work collectively with relevant stakeholders, such as telecommunication operators, international, regional and national associations, organizations, civil society, and private sectors to bridge the digital divide;

3 to give priority to ITU regionally approved initiatives at the national, regional, interregional and global levels, that reflect optimal integration of ICT with the aim of bridging the digital divide.