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| Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau |
| ITU-D Innovation |
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| **Summary:**This report provides an overview on the ITU-D Innovation as one of the outputs and goals adopted at the World Telecommunication Development Conference in 2017 (WTDC-17) and PP-14, respectively. Taking into account result-based management and actions, this report also provides ITU-D innovation objectives and strategies, the key actions already undertaken or planned, and ways forward to implement the ITU-D innovation.**Action required:**TDAG is invited to note this document and provide guidance, as deemed necessary.**References:**Buenos Aires Declaration of the WTDC-17; WTDC-17 Resolutions 17 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017), 30 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017), 66 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017), 71 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017), 76 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017), new resolution 85; PP-14 Resolution 200 (Busan, 2014), and PP-14 ITU-wide Goal 4. |

# Background

Innovation has been recognized as one of the main goals of ITU Membership at both the World Telecommunication Development Conferences (WTDC-14 and WTDC-17) and the Plenipotentiary Conferences (PP-14). Innovation is also one of the goals of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, namely Goal 9: “to build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”.

In 2014, during WTDC-14, the objective for innovation called for strengthened capacity of Member States to integrate ICT innovation in national development agendas and one Regional Initiative related to Europe (EUR-5). At WTDC-17, ITU Membership strengthened this innovation objective further in order to develop strategies to promote innovation initiatives, including through public, private and public-private partnerships. Additionally, WTDC-17 adopted Regional Initiatives on innovation for all regions highlighting the renewed importance of innovation for socio-economic development.

Innovation was also highlighted as an internal goal for BDT during PP-14, with the aim to foster BDT to re-invent its products and services to adapt to the changing ICT/telecommunication environment. Thus, innovation in BDT has both internal and external dimensions.

As ITU, ITU-D in particular, is a UN specialized agency in telecommunications/ICTs, BDT has been proactive with delivering concrete objectives, strategies, and actions in the converged ICT eco-system.

# Objectives and Strategies

In accordance with WTDC-17, the main objectives of ITU-D innovation are to provide assistance in the form of products, services and tools to support ITU Membership to actively foster the development of vibrant innovation ecosystems and accelerate digital transformation that fosters sustainable growth of the digital economy.

Output 3.4 of the Buenos Aires Action Plan (BaAP) specifies some expectations on how to deliver on the innovation objective of WTDC-17, namely through:

* products and services on telecommunication/ICT innovation, such as knowledge-sharing and assistance, upon request, on developing a national innovation agenda;
* mechanisms for partnerships; and
* development of telecommunication/ICT innovation strategies, policies, and projects.

The updated innovation action plan also highlights several strategies to deliver this expected output, to cite a few:

* conducting comprehensive ecosystem mapping and disseminating information, conducting studies and building innovation capacity (including through holding regional innovation forums);
* fostering all stakeholders (including entrepreneurship, small and medium firms), and strengthening ecosystem linkages (including at national and global levels);
* developing ICT innovation (including updating innovation and entrepreneurship into ICT policies) in national development agenda;
* supporting development of initiatives, new partnership and projects, and digital innovation ecosystems; and
* developing mechanisms to support, scale up, and promote initiatives on ICT centric innovation ecosystems.

# Key Actions and Results

BDT conducted several key actions such as developing toolkits, conducting national and regional capacity building workshops on innovation, conducting national innovation ecosystem assessments, providing assistance in development and facilitation of innovation projects, and sharing knowledge and information on the related topic in consultation with Membership and concerned key stakeholders. BDT has also been developing tools to accelerate the internal innovation agenda and undertaking initiatives focused on specific key challenges with concerned stakeholders.

# External Innovation Actions

Based on outcomes of WTDC-14 and WTDC-17, the innovation programs are being implemented to accelerate digital transformation and foster the sustainable growth of the digital economy. Several key actions have been delivered to achieve the objectives.

* + 1. **Innovation Toolkits**

In 2017, BDT launched the toolkit: [*Bridging the Digital Innovation Divide: Strengthening ICT Centric Innovation ecosystem*](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Innovation/Documents/Publications/Policy_Toolkit-Innovation_D012A0000D13301PDFE.pdf)*.*

* The toolkit helped countries understand and adopt the lenses of a *Digital Innovation Framework*, which enables the development of a set of policies and projects that foster national innovation.
* The toolkit also strengthened and empowered national stakeholders to start their journey of *digital transformation through innovation*.

In 2018, BDT intends to optimize this toolkit for different languages, upon resource availability in order to scale and expand its reach and impact.

BDT has also been developing new related tools and is in the process of developing a new toolkit to accelerate digital transformation through implementation of concrete projects and new acceleration framework aimed at supporting sustainable growth of digital economies. This toolkit will be launched in the second half 2018.

**3.1.2 Innovation Capacity Building Workshops**

Based on the outcome of the first toolkit above, BDT has developed a set of training workshops that help national and regional experts build their innovation competencies. The following workshops were successfully delivered in 2017:

* [**Executive Workshop for Europe: Bridging the Digital Innovation Divide**](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Pages/Events/2017/EW/Executive-Workshop-on-Bridging-the-Digital-Innovation-Divide.aspx), 12-13 September 2017, Ljubljana, Slovenia, in collaboration with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and International Center for Promotion of Enterprises (ICPE), and representatives from several countries in Europe.
* [**Multi-stakeholder Global Workshop @ ITU Telecom World '17: Bridging the Digital Innovation Divide**](https://itu.int/en/ITU-D/Innovation/Pages/Events/2017/WSTelecom17.aspx), 26-28 September 2017, Busan, South Korea. Workshop was attended by 10 countries from multiple regions.
* [**Bridging the Digital Innovation Divide: Accelerating Digital Transformation towards the 4th Industrial Revolution**](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Innovation/Pages/Events/2017/BDID_Gaborone.aspx), 11-12 December 2017, Gaborone, Botswana. Workshop was held in collaboration with SADC secretariat and attended by representatives from several SADC countries.

To date, BDT has trained over 40 national or regional experts representing 20 countries and certified 30 of them. BDT will be scaling these initiatives in 2018 and also expand the workshops to include additional content fostering national ICT centric innovation capacities.

**3.1.3 National Innovation Ecosystem Assessments**

In 2017, BDT conducted several detailed country level assessments including Rwanda, Kenya, and Moldova and completed additional assessments in other regions. BDT will continue to deliver such country reviews upon request by membership.

Furthermore, to scale up the capacity to conduct innovation ecosystem assessments, BDT started working directly with trained and certified national experts, to assist them in conducting their own country assessments. National expert-led assessments have been conducted for F.Y.R. Macedonia, Serbia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Based on these outcomes, BDT is in the process of developing digital innovation profile reports for the concerned countries. These reports offer a short overview and profile of the digital innovation framework at national levels, providing an internationally comparable measurement of ICT innovation capabilities. This approach is enabling BDT to expand its activities and deliver a scalable and more sustainable model of engagement for membership.

**3.1.4 Innovation Projects and Initiatives Development**

BDT raised funding of projects to address the gaps in innovation capabilities in countries by developing toolkit(s) on accelerating digital transformation through innovation and facilitate development of bankable projects for membership.

Some country level ICT innovation gaps, identified during the previous assessment, are being explored for development into bankable projects. New initiatives will be undertaken to facilitate securing of funding for these country level projects through renewed multi-stakeholder and multi-partnership engagements with membership and other related parties.

The outcome of these initiatives is expected to build a scalable framework for BDT to develop innovation capabilities essential in accelerating digital transformation.

**3.1.5 Knowledge Sharing on Innovation**

BDT strengthened mechanisms for enhanced knowledge sharing for membership on innovation. The expected outcome is to share challenges and opportunities, discuss good practices, and offer a platform for twinning, networking and learnings of ongoing and planned country level initiatives. The following have been conducted and will be explored:

* BDT held a side event during WTDC-17 on *the Digital Economy: Accelerating Digital Transformation*, in October 2017 in Buenos Aires.
* In-line with the innovation forum held in 2017, BDT will be holding the 2nd joint EUR/CIS regional on 27-29 March 2018 in Chisinau, Moldova. In addition, other regional innovation forums will be identified and explored in order to support implementing regional initiatives.
* BDT is to hold the annual *WSIS Innovation Track* at WSIS forum in March 2018, and explore other opportunities around ITU events such as Telecom 2018 and PP-18.

In order to serve more membership, BDT plans to develop new innovation mechanisms for knowledge-sharing through using electronic communication tools that can enhance co-creation of products and services and bring together a community of national innovation experts more regularly.

# Internal Innovation Actions

BDT developed new tools and frameworks for internal innovation issues: e.g.,

* **Innovation Products and Services Communication Framework:** An essential process is the communication related to its products and services including innovation. A new developed innovation framework is being piloted to help with a systemic evaluation of existing related processes and to achieve a specific outcome roadmap to improve this key internal communication process. Innovation Service is experimenting with these tools and will scale outcome based on its focused learning.
* **Resource Mobilization Framework:** ITU, BDT in particular with its clear development mandate, emphazised importance of resource mobilization, which needs revaluation of products and services supporting resource mobilization. Newly developed tools and frameworks are being explored with aim to create an adaptive and flexible strategy and initiatives to support an exploratory roadmap for resource mobilization for the BDT.

The outcome of these new approaches to internal innovation is to enhance or develop specific processes enabling innovation of BDT products and services, while engaging more BDT staff in the beneficial internal transformation.

# Ways Forward

BDT will strengthen innovation activities as below among others:

* optimize existing toolkits and expand national and regional capacity building workshops for different languages;
* scale-up national expert-led digital innovation profile assessments;
* improve the use of electronic communication and outreach in innovation activities;
* assist more Member States in developing their innovation capabilities to accelerate digital transformation;
* launch a toolkit on accelerating digital transformation; and
* develop and implement innovation projects and initiatives for BDT and membership.

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