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| ITU official logo_blue_RGB**TDAG Working Group on Strategic and Operational Plans**  **17 July 2020, Virtual** | | |
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| **Title:** | Report on the meeting of the TDAG Working Group on Strategic and Operational Plans, 17 July 2020 | |

1. **Opening of the meeting and welcome remarks**

The Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), Ms Doreen Bogdan-Martin, welcomed participants to the TDAG Working Group on the Strategic and Operational Plans and shared some milestones on how far ITU has come and her perspective on building tomorrow’s future today.

* 35 years ago (in 1985), Sir Donald Maitland’s famous Missing Link report made the case for universal connectivity as the essential foundation for economic and social prosperity.
* 15 years ago (in 2005), at the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) the international community laid out a plan of action to improve connectivity and access in the use of ICTs to be achieved by 2015, and that plan also included connecting schools, connecting villages and connecting hospitals to the Internet.
* 10 years ago (in 2010), the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, a high‑level advocacy group was established to look at the best ways to accelerate social and economic development.
* 5 years ago (in 2015), the 17 Sustainable Development Goals were adopted, with Target 9.c as a call to significantly increase access to information and communication technologies and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020.

“Yet here we are in the year 2020 with 3.6 billion people that are still totally unconnected and many millions more that really lack truly meaningful connectivity that would change their lives,” the Director observed. As ITU looks ahead to the World Telecommunication Development Conference in 2021 (WTDC-21) and the next Plenipotentiary conference in 2022,where members will adopt the strategic plan for the years 2024-2027, the Director called on the working group to bear in mind two major shifts highlighted in the United Nations Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation launched in June 2020. Those two shifts mirror greater emphasis on “digital” as a tool for global development and an explicit recognition that the path forward cannot be taken alone.

“Multistakeholder cross‑sectoral cooperation and collaboration will define the success or failure of the 2020-2030 Decade of Action. The world has changed dramatically and irrevocably since the World Telecommunication Development Conference in 2017 (WTDC-17) and our working environment has also changed,” the Director said, adding that other UN agencies are also stepping up their activities in the digital space, many of them in partnership with BDT.

“The intense focus on digital means not just opportunity but also competition. I believe that we are going to have to work harder than ever to convince stakeholders that we are the right choice for partnering on projects and initiatives that bring real and rapid impact. Creating this fit‑for‑purpose BDT is all about recognizing these new realities and also ensuring that we are up to the challenge,” the Director told participants.

“What objectives, outcomes and outputs should be envisioned to pave the way for universal, affordable, accessible and trusted connectivity by 2030? What compelling products and services portfolio and offerings will help us attract and retain partners to achieve those goals set out in the Action Plan, the Connect 2030 Agenda and the ITU strategic targets? The Director concluded her remarks with these questions and encouraged the working group to “be bold, creative and far‑sighted in devising a winning strategy” that will deliver on the promises of BDT to its members, the global community and to all the world's people.

The Chairman of the TDAG Working Group on the Strategic and Operational Plans, Ms Blanca González **(Spain)**, thanked the Director for her inspiring remarks and acknowledged the presence of the working group’s two Vice-Chairmen: Mr Christopher Kemei **(Kenya)** and Mr Wim Rullens **(Netherlands)**, and that of the Chairman of TDAG, Ms Roxanne McElvane Webber **(United States)**.

1. **Approval of the agenda**

The [agenda](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG26.SOP-C-0001/en) was approved without modification.

**Mandate, presentations and general discussion**

The mandate of the TDAG Working Group on Strategic and Operational Plans is threefold:

* To review the status of implementation and impact of the strategic plan approved by the 2018 Plenipotentiary Conference and to prepare proposals for the draft new ITU-D contribution to the overall ITU strategic plan for the years 2024-2027.
* To review the status of implementation and impact of the Buenos Aires Action Plan and its links with the BDT operational plan.
* To review the status of implementation and impact of the four-year rolling operational plan, identify areas of improvement, and develop recommendations for the Draft Operational Plan prior to consideration by the Council.

The General Secretariat presented the process followed to develop the ITU strategic plan for 2020-2023. This process starts within the General Secretariat, which provides the first input to the Council session that takes place one year before the Plenipotentiary Conference. In the previous cycle, it was the 2017 session of the Council and for the present cycle, it will be the Council session of 2021. The Council is responsible for setting up the mechanism for the overall process, and initiates the preparation of the strategic plan. The chart in [Document 3](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-d/md/18/tdag26.sop/c/D18-TDAG26.SOP-C-0003!!PDF-E.pdf) highlights all the steps that were followed in the development of the strategic plan for 2020-2023.

The preparatory process for the strategic plan for the years 2024-2027 has not formally started, but BDT shared some preliminary ideas and principles with participants. The first is to build on the "One-ITU" framework in order to continue to have an aligned approach across the three Sectors of the Union. It will be necessary to review implementation of the 2020-2023 strategic plan and of results-based management (RBM) and make any adjustments needed to the overall strategic framework. It may also be necessary to review the mission statement, the goals, and the different hierarchical levels of the strategic plan. The Director already mentioned in her opening remarks some of the key changes within the overall ICT-ecosystem and the UN environment that this TDAG working group needs to take into consideration in its work.

Participants were informed of key updates up to mid-2020, which include the Quarterly Review Process implemented by thematic priority. In 2021, BDT will scale up results measurement, monitoring and evaluation through key performance indicators (KPIs) for each thematic priority.

The General Secretariat presented the annual report of the Council ([Document 35](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0035/en)) on activities undertaken from April 2019 to April 2020, highlighting ITU-wide strategic goals and targets and the Sector and inter-Sectoral objectives. The report features activities in a results-oriented, evidence-based and thematic-oriented way, including analytical figures showing overall progress towards the Connect 2030 targets, and detailed information on the indicators endorsed by membership in the operational plans of the three Sectors and the General Secretariat. It is the first report on the implementation of the ITU strategic plan for 2020-2023 set out in Resolution 71 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference.

The Chairman of the working group stressed that it will be absolutely essential for the group to to analyse quantitatively the achievements to date pertaining to the objectives of Resolution 71 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) and to be able to do so in conjunction with the Sustainable Development Goals. She commented that even though Document 35 highlights progress in terms of Internet penetration, huge differences persist across the different regions. The group will be guided by Goal 9 (Target c) of the 2030 Agenda so that it can focus on the improvement of connectivity for developing countries, particularly least developed countries.

In addition, the group must work closely with the TDAG Working Group on Resolutions, Declaration and Thematic Priorities in order to ensure that both groups are fully aligned and moving in the same direction. Similarly, the group must coordinate closely with the TDAG Working Group on WTDC Preparations to align its position vis-à-vis the regional initiatives, in particular.

Participants acknowledged that when reviewing the strategic plan, it will be critical to bear in mind the need to develop the One-ITU concept without duplicating any activities from the other Sectors. The role of the group is to only recommend those activities and initiatives that are within the remit of BDT. Members can then decide what is priority and what is not when agreeing on the ITU-D component of the overall ITU strategic plan for 2024-2027.

The Chairman informed participants that they could already access a list of relevant material for the work of the group in [Document 2](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG26.SOP-C-0002/en), notably the “[Four-year rolling Operational plan for the Union for 2021-2024”; and](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0028/en)the “Report on the implementation of the strategic plan and the activities of the Union for 2019-2020”. It was further agreed to use from this list the [State of Broadband 2019 report](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/opb/pol/S-POL-BROADBAND.20-2019-PDF-E.pdf); recommendations from the [UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation](https://www.un.org/en/digital-cooperation-panel/); the [UN Secretary-General’s Roadmap for Digital Cooperation](https://www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap/); and [UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Guidance](https://unsdg.un.org/resources/united-nations-sustainable-development-cooperation-framework-guidance).

1. **Working methods**

**Virtual meetings with or without interpretation?**

The method chosen for the first block of virtual meetings (16-17 July 2020) of the three TDAG working groups was to provide interpretation based on requests from Member States, consistent with Resolution 1 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of WTDC. Based on the requests received, interpretation was provided in English, French and Spanish.

According to the process in Resolution 1, delegates are invited to indicate the language they require and are given a deadline by which the decision on the languages to be used will be taken. The deadline is usually 45-calendar days prior to the opening of the meeting in order to secure interpretation in the requested languages. For non-statutory meetings, a minimum of five requests must be received to service the meeting in the requested language.

**Recommendation:** For future virtual meetings of the working group, interpretation should be provided in the six official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English French, Russian and Spanish) within the budgetary limitations of the Union. If funds are not available, the meetings will be conducted in English only.

**E-mail correspondence/mailing list/Sharepoint site**

**Recommendation:** The group will communicate via e-mail correspondence and will have a collaborative Sharepoint site with a repository for its documents.

**Recommendation for RTOs to designate focal points for regional coordination**

All participants recognize the benefits of regional coordination for the six[[1]](#footnote-1) regions as already experienced in the preparation of all ITU conferences and assemblies. The recommendation to request regional telecommunication organizations (RTOs[[2]](#footnote-2)) to designate focal points for regional coordination was discussed at length in the TDAG Working Group on WTDC Preparations on 16 July 2020. That discussion continued, this time with some focus on the specific roles TDAG vice‑chairmen from the various regions could play.

Considering that in every region there are two TDAG vice‑chairmen, it was felt that these vice-chairmen could play a role, alongside the focal points to be designated by RTOs.

Giving her perspective, the Chairman of TDAG underlined two things. One is that every country has a voice and that everyone who participates in the meetings of TDAG and of its working groups should understand they have ample opportunity to represent their country large and small — and that there is a vehicle and avenue for them to express their views and submit their contributions. The other is the need to define the term “coordination”. This would help determine the appropriate time and method for designating focal points. Noting that there are people who already expect to be in these positions, the Chairman of TDAG stressed the importance of having a fully inclusive process in all the tasks to be carried out until WTDC-21 and beyond.

The Chairman of the TDAG Working Group on WTDC Preparations, Mr Santiago Reyes-Borda (Canada), describing regional coordination as “an excellent idea”, informed participants that in the first preparatory meeting of CITEL (11 August 2020), he would ensure that due attention is given to the summary reports from the three TDAG working group meetings of July 2020. In its preparations for WTDC, CITEL would cover all ITU Member States in the Americas region without exception, even if they do not belong to CITEL, like in the case of Cuba. CITEL, he said, would work in close coordination with the ITU Regional Office in Brasilia, with the TDAG vice‑chairmen for the Americas region and with the Chairman of TDAG.

Participants acknowledged that the TDAG Working Group on the Strategic and Operational Plans is slightly different from the other two working groups because its mandate (the strategic plan) is now linked to the Plenipotentiary Conference and not to WTDC. The Chairman of the group underlined that “this difference should be borne in mind when asking RTOs to designate focal points. Most likely they will nominate someone that is leading the preparations for WTDC. But this working group may need someone who is responsible for coordinating matters related to the Plenipotentiary Conference. There is a need to think differently for this group, recognizing too that RTOs can play a very important role in an advisory capacity.”

It was agreed that a definition of the term “coordination” is needed and could be communicated to members through a circular letter so that participants in TDAG and in its working groups are all on the same page; that all the voices are heard; and that things can proceed in an orderly manner.

**Recommendation:** The TDAG Working Group on the Strategic and Operational Plans has the opportunity to reflect on the observations and comments made at this first meeting. The group will decide further down the line on the role that would be assigned to focal points designated by the different regional telecommunication organizations. A clear definition of the term “coordination” in the context of “regional coordination” should be communicated in a circular letter to all members.

1. **Work plan**

**Deadlines for submission of written contributions**

Contributions are subject to deadlines set out in WTDC Resolution 1. Consistent with this resolution, “contributions must be received not later than 45 days before the opening of a meeting if they are to be translated for the meeting. Beyond this 45-day deadline, the contributor may submit the document in the original language and in any official language into which it may have been translated by the author. Contributions that do not meet this 45-day deadline but are received at least 12 days before the opening of the meeting shall be published, but not translated.”

Any reports produced by the working group will be translated into all six languages.

**Dates of next meetings**

The meeting discussed the proposed work plan in [Document DT/1](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG26.WP-200716-TD-0001/en), which outlines four blocks of meetings for all three TDAG working groups. The first block of meetings being 16 and 17 July 2020, followed by a second block of meetings in September, a third block also in September and a fourth block in October 2020. Participants generally agreed with the meeting schedule and time-frame proposed for the Working Group on the Strategic and Operational Plans in the third block of meetings.

**Recommendation:** The working group set 18 September 2020 as the deadline for submitting contributions and agreed to hold its second meeting on 1 October 2020 to prepare for the Council and to coordinate its work with other groups, in particular the TDAG Working Group on Resolutions, Declaration and Thematic Priorities. Its draft report to the extraordinary meeting of TDAG, tentatively scheduled for 23 November 2020, will be ready by 8 October 2020. Its final report will first go to the 2021 meeting of TDAG, and from TDAG to the 2021 session of the Council. Document 35 of the Council will serve as a baseline document for the presentation of reports to TDAG on the strategic and operational plans of the union.

1. **Conclusion**

Building on the Director's opening remarks the meeting agreed that a high‑level vision from her on where the world is heading, would be of great benefit to members in their development of a forward-looking strategy and vision for BDT and ITU-D. Guidance regarding the implementation of the Buenos Aires Action Plan was also considered useful and could be provided in the form of a background document, with high‑level guidelines.

The Director responded that she would be delighted to share with the members how BDT is doing in implementing the 2020-2023 strategic plan. On the question of setting the context and vision for the future drawing on what is happening around the world, the Director agreed that this would be helpful and has been done in the past in the context of Resolution 71. Now more than ever, the BDT mission and mandate are linked with many other sectors. “It is important to take stock not just of where we are, but where others are so that we ensure as we map out our strategic plan for the future, that we carve out the appropriate place for the work of the D Sector and of course, overall for the work of ITU.”

The Director thanked the Chairman for her leadership and for her longstanding commitment to ITU. “We have been together since the beginning, so I really look forward to working with you personally and with your vice‑chairmen and colleagues as we take this work forward.”

The Chairman thanked all participants and members of the TDAG Bureau for their cooperation.

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1. Africa, Americas, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Commonwealth of Independent States, Europe. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT); European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT); Inter-American Telecommunications Commission (CITEL); African Telecommunications Union (ATU); Council of Arab Ministers of Telecommunication and Information represented by the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States (LAS); and the Regional Commonwealth in the field of Communications (RCC). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)