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| **Logo, company name  Description automatically generated** | A close up of a sign  Description automatically generated**World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-22)**  **Kigali, Rwanda, 6-16 June 2022** | |
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| PLENARY MEETING | | **Addendum 17 to Document WTDC-22/24-E** |
|  | | **2 May 2022** |
|  | | **Original: English** |
| Member States of the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL) | | |
| Proposal to modify WTDC Resolution 37 bridging the digital divide | | |
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| **Priority area:** - Resolutions and Recommendations  **Summary:**  In addition to stimulating the issue of digital literacy, the CITEL Member States propose to revise WTDC Resolution 37 to address the issue of affordability. In this sense, the support for small initiatives, including community networks, fosters business models that allow access by communities that often have serious economic constraints. Likewise, they allow the expansion of infrastructure access to remote areas and small rural communities.  **Expected results:**  WTDC-22 is invited to examine and approve the proposal in this document.  **References:**  WTDC Resolution 37 | | |

**MOD** IAP/24A17/1

RESOLUTION 37 (Rev.Kigali, 2022)

Bridging the digital divide

The World Telecommunication Development Conference (Kigali, 2022),

recalling

*a)* United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 70/1, on transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

*b)* UNGA Resolution 70/125, on the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS);

*c)* Resolution 25 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on strengthening the regional presence;

*d)* Resolution 135 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on ITU’s role in the durable and sustainable development of telecommunications/information communication technologies, in providing technical assistance and advice to developing countries[[1]](#footnote-1)1 and in implementing relevant national, regional and interregional projects;

*e)* Resolution 139 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on the use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies to bridge the digital divide and build an inclusive information society; 

*f)* Resolution 175 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on telecommunication/information and communication technology accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs; 

*g)* Resolution 200 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on the Connect 2030 Agenda for global telecommunication/information and communication technology, including broadband, for sustainable development; 

*h)* Resolution 11 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) of this conference, on telecommunication/ICT services in rural, isolated and poorly served areas and indigenous communities;

*i)* Resolution 16 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) of this conference, on special actions and measures for the least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing states (SIDS), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and countries with economies in transition;

*j)* Resolution 23 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) of this conference, on Internet access and availability for developing countries and charging principles for international Internet connection;

*k)* Resolution 46 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) of this conference, on assistance and promotion for indigenous communities through ICT;

*l)* Resolution 69 (Rev. Hammamet, 2016) of the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA), on non-discriminatory access and use of Internet resources and telecommunications/ICTs;

*m)* Recommendation 19 (Rev. Addis Ababa, 2021) of this Conference on telecommunications for rural and remote areas,

*n)* Resolution 139 (Rev. Busan, 2014) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on the use of telecommunications/ICTs to bridge the digital divide and build an inclusive information society;

*o)* Resolution 200 (Busan, 2014) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on the Connect 2020 Agenda for global telecommunication/ICT development;

*p)* Resolution 16 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of this conference, on special actions and measures for the least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing states (SIDS), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and countries with economies in transition;

*q)* Resolution 175 (Rev. Busan, 2014) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;

*r)* Resolution 58 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) of this conference, on telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities, including persons with age-related disabilities,

noting

*a)* that broadband connectivity has the potential to bridge the digital divide;

*b)* that digital literacy is a requirement for closing the digital divide;

*c)* that developing countries benefit from integrating ICTs into education systems, by providing a more effective education experience and ensuring that all students obtain the skills necessary to succeed in a knowledge‑based economy and society;

*d)* that the beneficiaries of such integration will be not only the students, but entire populations;

*e)* that such a transformation will improve education, assist in connecting all citizens globally, and facilitate the effective use of national resources for the future of children and society;

*f)* that countries and communities have limited education budgets which have to be apportioned among many different needs, and so studies on the relative benefits of ICTs in education systems will help countries and communities make informed decisions;

*g)* that UNGA will assess the outcomes and implementation of both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2030 and the WSIS outcomes in 2025,

recognizing

*a)* that the telecommunication environment has undergone significant changes in recent years and that progress has been made in implementing the outputs of Phases 1 and 2 of WSIS;

*b)* that there is still a need to show clearly what the digital divide is, where it occurs, who suffers from it, and the consequences of not bridging the divide;

*c)* that development in ICTs has continued to reduce the cost of relevant equipment;

*d)* that, in many ITU Member States, regulations have been adopted dealing with regulatory 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 competition in the provision of telecommunication/ICT services has also continued to reduce telecommunication/ICT costs to users;

*f)* that national plans and projects for the provision of telecommunication services in developing countries contribute to reducing costs to users and bridging the digital divide;

*g)* that the introduction of new applications and services has also resulted in bringing down telecommunication/ICT costs;

*h)* that community networks and small ISPs are an important part of the connectivity ecosystem and help to bridge the digital divide;

*i)* that there is still an ongoing need to create digital opportunities in developing countries, including LDCs, SIDS, LLDCs and countries with economies in transition, taking advantage of the revolution that ICTs have witnessed and are 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 the 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 economic commissions, the World Bank, the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT), the regional economic communities, the regional development banks and many others, and that such activities have increased following the conclusion of 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;

*l)* that the SDGs, officially known under the title "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", are a set of 17 "global goals" with 169 targets aimed at ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity for all,

recognizing further

*a)* ITU's role as a catalyst, and in particular that of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU‑D) as coordinator and promoter of the rational use of resources in the context of the various projects intended to narrow the digital divide;

*b)* that most ITU Member States have adopted integrated connectivity policies with a view to making affordable ICT services more accessible to citizens, as an indispensable tool in reducing the digital divide;

*c)* 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 most disadvantaged;

*d)* that the declarations of previous WTDCs (Istanbul, 2002; Doha, 2006; Hyderabad, 2010; and Dubai, 2014, Buenos Aires, 2017) have continued to affirm that ICTs and ICT applications are essential for political, economic, social and cultural development, that they play an important role in poverty alleviation, job creation, environmental protection and the prevention and mitigation of natural and other disasters (in addition to the importance of disaster prediction), and that they must be placed at the service of development in other sectors; and that, therefore, opportunities offered by new ICTs should be fully exploited in order to foster sustainable development;

*e)* that it is important for ITU to assist in bridging the national, regional and international digital divide in ICTs and ICT applications by facilitating interoperability, interconnection and global connectivity of telecommunication networks and services, and by playing a leading role in the process for follow-up and implementation of the relevant goals and objectives of WSIS, and to focus on bridging the digital divide and providing broadband for all,

considering

*a)* the role of ITU, in particular the specific functions of ITU-D;

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

*c)* the progress accomplished in the implementation of the outcomes of Phases 1 and 2 of WSIS;

*d)* 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 tool for bridging the digital divide;

*e)* 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;

*f)* 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;

*g)* that using systems, such as low-cost wired and wireless technologies, including long-range and community-based networks, can be an effective solution for connecting rural, remote, and underserved communities;

*h)* that the programmes of BDT under its action plans, on information and communication infrastructure and technology development, have provided assistance to developing countries in the area of spectrum management and in the efficient and cost‑effective development of rural, national and international broadband telecommunication networks, including satellite;

*i)* that, despite the previous decade's achievements in ICT connectivity, many forms of digital divide remain, both between and within countries, that need to be addressed through, among other actions, strengthened enabling policy environments and international cooperation to improve affordability, access, education, capacity building, multilingualism, cultural preservation, investment and appropriate financing, as well as measures to improve digital literacy and skills and to promote cultural diversity,

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,

considering further

*a)* that public rights of way and the sharing of infrastructure, as well as the implementation of public policy through public investment and other mechanisms, when employed to support the application of ICTs, can lead to considerable savings in the cost of provision;

*b)* that the distribution of the benefits brought about by ICTs and the digital economy 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;

*c)* 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 the implementation of the aims of the Geneva Plan of Action and Tunis Agenda and of 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), which is expected to be maintained in the new plan for 2020-2024, taking into consideration that such access shall be affordable;

*d)* that the implementation of the 2015-2020 SDGs as adopted by UNGA in September 2015 will play a major role in narrowing the digital divide, and the WSIS+10 Statement and WSIS+10 vision for WSIS beyond 2015;

*e)* the continuing disparity between those who have and those who do not have access to ICTs, referred to as the "digital divide";

*f)* the lessons learned from the implementation of Action Line C7 of the Tunis Agenda;

*g)* that the goal of using and disseminating ICTs is to bring benefits in all aspects of our daily life, and that ICTs are enormously important in facilitating citizens' access to ICT applications;

*h)* that the application of ICTs in contexts specified in WSIS Action Line C7 must give due regard to local needs in terms of language, culture and sustainable development;

*i)* that one of the principal advantages of satellite is access to remote, local communities without increased connection costs due to distance or to the geographical features of the areas in which the societies are located;

*j)* that the security and privacy of these applications require the building of confidence in the use of ICT;

*k)* that as ICT is being continuously integrated into all sectors of society, the applications referred to in WSIS Action Line C7 are triggering profound changes in social productivity and hastening a major leap forward in industrial productivity, thus creating a good opportunity for developing countries to raise their level of industrial development and improve social and economic growth;

*l)* that sharing of experiences and best practices among ITU members will help to facilitate deployment of ICT applications,

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 their translation into equitable mechanisms for action, particularly in respect of issues related to Internet management, taking into consideration the special initiatives for promoting full gender equality, having regard to persons with specific needs, including persons with disabilities and the elderly, youth, issues related to 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 and digital literacy solutions which support sustainable and affordable access to telecommunication/ICTs, and, in parallel, to continue to shorten the time-frames for implementation of the Digital Solidarity Agenda, beginning with the Geneva Plan of Action, the outcomes of the Connect the World summits, the Tunis Agenda and the strategic plan for the Union,

resolves

that BDT, in collaboration with the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau and the Radiocommunication Bureau, continue to adopt the 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,

resolves to request the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau

1 to continue to follow up BDT’s work pursuant to Resolution 8 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) 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 and 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 advocate the advantages of developing low‑cost, high‑quality telecommunication/ICT customer equipment, that can be directly connected to the networks supporting the Internet and Internet services and applications, so that economies of scale can be achieved on account of their acceptability at the global level, taking into consideration the possibility of satellite use of this equipment;

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

4 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;

5 to continue to foster the development of innovative models in order to reduce poverty and bridge the digital divide in the developing countries successfully;

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

7 to encourage innovation and the use of new and emerging technologies; and the development of business models or other innovative ways to help telecommunication operators, including the small and local ones, in reducing costs, overcoming geographic obstacles, and thereby bridging the digital divide;

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‑D in particular;

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

10 to facilitate discussion and exchange of best practices regarding the challenges and benefits of implementing projects or activities relating to e-applications referred to in WSIS Action Line C7 through strategic partnerships;

11 to take into consideration the importance of the security and confidentiality of the ICT applications highlighted in WSIS Action Line C7 and of protection of privacy, in order to facilitate discussions regarding guidelines, tools and mechanisms; improve collaboration between government authorities; implement user-friendly government services, potentially including integration and personalization of services; improve the quality of e-government services; and increase awareness of such services;

12 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 and marginal, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups;

13 to continue supporting Member States in developing policy and regulatory frameworks that will expand and support the engagement of complementary networks, small operators, community networks and other stakeholders in bridging the digital divide;

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

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

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

17 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 radio-frequency resource, particularly the digital dividend, and of the orbit/spectrum resource, with the aim of stimulating satellite broadband development and coverage for bridging the digital divide;

18 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;

19 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;

20 to continue to support and coordinate efforts to connect people with disabilities, including persons with age-related disabilities, using ICT services and applications;

21 to continue cooperating with study groups of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) in bridging the standardization gap between developing and developed countries**;**

22 to ensure that the necessary resources within the budgetary limits are allocated to the above actions;

23 to continue to make these applications a major strand for the activities of the relevant BDT programme, focusing on its key role for the implementation of study Questions related to ICT applications for the previous and forthcoming study periods;

24 to circulate the outputs of these activities on applications to all Member States on a regular basis;

25 that BDT collaborate closely, through the ITU regional offices, with ITU Member States in order to implement these regional projects, in addition to maintaining an active communication channel between the strategic stakeholders and playing a central role,

invites

international financial institutions, donor agencies and private‑sector entities to assist and to develop different business models in developing ICT applications referred to in WSIS Action Line C7, including public-private partnership projects and programmes in 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 needs, especially in the developing countries;

2 when implementing Resolution 17 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) of this conference, on implementation of regionally approved initiatives at the national, regional, interregional and global levels, to select a project among those proposed for the regions that reflects optimal integration of ICTs with the aim of bridging the digital divide;

3 to consider the possibility of promoting digital literacy policies and mechanisms, as a means to help bridge the digital divide; to participate actively in regional and global collaborative forums dealing with experiences and best practices in the implementation of e-government strategies and programmes;

4 to participate in the study of the role of ICTs in education systems by contributing their own experiences regarding the implementation of ICTs for achieving universal education worldwide;

5 to adopt inclusive and innovative policies to close the digital divide, taking into account local providers, community networks and other relevant actors in the connectivity expansion,

invites Member States and Sector Members

1 to incorporate, in their e‑government strategies and programmes, actions to encourage the use of ICTs to improve collaboration between government authorities, actions to encourage the implementation of user-friendly services, potentially including integration and personalization of services to improve the quality of e‑government services, and actions to increase awareness of such services;

2 to support the collection and analysis of data and statistics on e‑applications and services, such as ICT applications in industry, e‑government and e‑health and ICT in education, that will contribute to public policy design and implementation as well as enabling cross-country comparisons;

3 to participate actively in regional and global collaborative forums dealing with experiences and best practices in the implementation of e-government strategies and programmes;

4 to participate in the study of the role of ICTs in education systems by contributing their own experiences regarding the implementation of ICTs for achieving universal education worldwide.

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1. 1 These include the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)