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| **TDAG Working Group  on the future of Study Group Questions (TDAG-WG-futureSGQ)**  **1st Meeting, Virtual, 4 Mars 2024** | | A close up of a sign  Description automatically generated |
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| Chair, TDAG-WG-futureSGQ | | |
| Background paper | | |
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| **Summary:**  This background paper invites members to consider various factors when developing future study Questions. It suggests reassessing current topics in view of the rapidly evolving technology landscape, directing efforts toward more concrete and actionable objectives, fostering closer alignment with other ITU Sectors on emerging topics, and maintaining a focus on efficiency and resource optimization.  **Action required:**  TDAG-WG-futureSGQ is invited to review this document and provide guidance as deemed appropriate.  **References:**  WTDC Resolution 2 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) | | |

**Background**

Study groups are instrumental in providing ITU-D members with timely information, practical guidelines, useful recommendations, and best practices on issues that are critical for the development of telecommunications/ICTs. The accelerated pace of innovations relevant to emerging digital technologies makes it very desirable for the study groups to focus on topics that are up-to-date and well-timed to address novel developments that shape the future. The following concerns have already been voiced by some ITU-D members.

1. **Static topics over extended study periods**

While it is acknowledged that many topics are of critical importance, some of them have been studied for several study periods. Also, among the 14 study Questions, most topics in this study period are continuations from the previous one, with only 1 new study Question.

The significant transformation of the ICT environment, the emergence of new technologies and the increasing importance of ICT in other sectors beyond telecommunication, call for a fresh look that anticipates future needs and prioritizes new challenges.

It may therefore be time to consider phasing out certain longstanding topics that have already been thoroughly explored and for which substantial resources have been devoted. Instead, the priority could shift to new topics that are increasingly relevant but insufficiently studied. This transition will necessitate careful consideration of the balance between maintaining a repository of valuable past work and fostering innovation in new areas.

1. **Study Questions with too broad or open-ended scope**

The terms of reference for some study Questions have changed very little compared to the previous study period. This may be an indication that their scope is too broad or open-ended, making it difficult to evaluate which mandates of a Question have been completed at the end of a study period.

The [ITU strategic goals](https://www.itu.int/en/council/planning/Pages/default.aspx) (“Universal Connectivity” and “Sustainable Digital Transformation”) and discussions on future ITU-D priorities should be the guiding principles for defining the future of ITU-D study Questions, and a clear and explicit linkage between each study Question and the ITU’s strategic goals is very desirable. These goals should not be mere rhetoric; they should be translated into concrete, actionable items reflected within the study Questions.

1. **Need to study new topics in tandem with other ITU Sectors**

Other ITU Sectors continuously study new topics as part of their activities in standardization and radio-frequency spectrum management. This represents an opportunity for the ITU-D Sector to closely reflect and build upon such new topics studied by ITU-T and ITU-R, by developing case studies and practical guidelines with respect to these topics.

Thus far, in order to enhance coordination activities between the ITU Sectors, an inter-sectoral collaboration framework was established, which resulted in inter-sectoral [mapping tables](https://www.itu.int/en/general-secretariat/Pages/ISCG/ISCT_Documents-Mapping_Tables.aspx) that map activities of the ITU-D study groups with the activities of other ITU Sectors.

While such mapping tables greatly facilitate collaboration between the Sectors on current study Questions, more focus should be given also to identifying potential new topics that would also benefit the development sector.

1. **Need to improve efficiency and optimize resource management**

In order to improve efficiency and optimize resource management, particularly in scheduling meetings and allocating resources (including BDT experts and advisors), there is a need to carefully consider if the current number of study Questions is still appropriate.

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