RESOLUTION 58 (Rev. Kigali, 2022)

Telecommunication/information and communication technology
accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons
with specific needs

The World Telecommunication Development Conference (Kigali, 2022),

recognizing

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

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

*c)* Resolution 70 (Rev. Geneva 2022) of the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly, on telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;

*d)* Article 12 of the International Telecommunication Regulations, adopted by the World Conference on International Telecommunications (Dubai, 2012), which states that Member States should promote access for persons with disabilities to international telecommunication services, taking into account the relevant Recommendations of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T);

*e)* the United Nations flagship report ''Disability and Development Report, 2018'', which sees telecommunication/ICT accessibility as a critical element for ensuring inclusion and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, and UNGA Resolution 73/142, which encourages Member States to promote access to information and communication, including information and communication technologies and systems, to ensure that accessibility is promoted as a means of achieving inclusive societies and development;

*f)* the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU‑D) Digital Inclusion initiative, which promotes telecommunication/ICT accessibility and use for the economic and social development of persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;

*g)* the formation of the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information Communication Technologies (G3ict), an ITU‑D Sector Member and flagship partnership initiative of the United Nations Global Alliance for ICT and Development (UN-GAID), and its activities;

*h)* the Model ICT Accessibility Policy Report for policy-makers, regulators and service providers, produced by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) in partnership with G3ict and available online, in order to: i) facilitate development of best policies and strategies for implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD); and ii) set forth action steps for an effective policy framework;

*i)* the related issues being examined in the work of ITU‑T and the ITU Radiocommunication Sector (ITU‑R) in relation to telecommunication/ICT accessibility;

*j)* the formation by the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) of the Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability (DCAD), sponsored by the Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau and in partnership with ITU‑T, as well as involving the participation of ITU‑D, in order to promote equal access to the information society by addressing issues of accessibility in relation to Internet governance;

*k)* the related resolutions from the Global Standards Collaboration (GSC) meetings;

*l)* activities relating to the development of new standards (e.g. ISO TC 159, JTC 1 SC35, IEC TC100, ETSI TC HF and W3C WAI), and the implementation and maintenance of existing standards (e.g. ISO 9241‑171);

considering

*a)* that the World Health Organization estimates that over one billion of the world's inhabitants live with some form of disability, and that there are different types of disabilities (e.g. physical, cognitive and sensorial disabilities), each requiring special considerations when designing telecommunication/ICT public policy;

*b)* that the UNCRPD, which came into force on 3 May 2008, requires States Parties to take appropriate measures, including:

1) undertake or promote research and development on, and promote the availability and use of, new technologies, including ICTs, mobility aids, devices and assistive technologies, suitable for persons with disabilities, giving priority to technologies at an affordable cost (Article 4, section 1 (*g*));

2) ensure ICT and emergency service access for persons with disabilities on an equal basis (Article 9, § 1(*b*));

3) promote ICT access for persons with disabilities to new ICT services, including Internet (Article 9, § 2 (*g*));

4) promote the design, production and distribution of accessible ICT at an early stage (Article 9, § 2(*h*));

5) ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion (Article 21);

6) provide information in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost (Article 21, § (*a*));

7) urge private entities that render services to the public to provide information and services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities (Article 21, § (*c*));

8) encourage mass media (including information providers through Internet) to make their services accessible to persons with disabilities (Article 21, § (*d*));

*c)* that, in addition, the UNCRPD further states that there is discrimination on the basis of disability if there is denial of reasonable accommodation, considering "reasonable accommodation" to mean necessary and appropriate modification or adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise of all human rights and fundamental freedoms (i.e. freedom of speech, access to information) (Article 2);

*d)* that States Parties to the UNCRPD undertake to collect adequate information for formulating and implementing policies to give effect to the Convention, and that this information must be disaggregated, and should help identify and address barriers faced by persons with disabilities in exercising their rights (Article 31);

*e)* that the outcome document of the UNGA high-level meeting on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities: the way forward, a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond, considers, *inter alia*, that the universal design approach should be followed in ensuring accessibility of information, assistive devices and other ICTs, including in remote or rural areas, as a means of achieving such goals, so that persons with disabilities can achieve their fullest potential throughout their lives;

*f)* that UNGA Resolution 66/288 endorses the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), entitled "The future we want", which states as follows: "... 9. We reaffirm the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other international instruments relating to human rights and international law. We emphasize the responsibilities of all States, in conformity with the Charter, to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability age or other status";

*g)* that UNGA Resolution 61/106 adopting the UNCPRD requests the Secretary-General in § 5 "… to implement progressively standards and guidelines for the accessibility of facilities and services of the United Nations system, taking into account relevant provisions of the Convention, in particular when undertaking renovations";

*h)* General comment No. 2 (2014) of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in relation to Article 9: Accessibility, on the need to promote access for persons with disabilities to new information and communication technologies and systems, including the Internet;

*i)* that maximizing access to telecommunication/ICT services, equipment, software and applications for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs will help to increase digital literacy and support equal access to education, health care and employment;

*j)* that persons with disabilities, both acting as individuals and through relevant organizations, should be involved in and participate in the process of elaborating legal/regulatory provisions, public policy and standards, pursuant to the rationale of "nothing about us without us";

taking into account

*a)* that the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) acknowledged that special attention should be given to the needs of older persons, persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs: i) when elaborating national cyberstrategies, including educational, administrative and legislative measures; ii) for using ICTs in education and human-resources development; iii) in order that equipment and services offer easy and affordable access, under the principles of universal design and assistive technology; iv) for promoting telework and increasing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities; v) for creating content that is pertinent to persons with disabilities; and vii) for creating the required abilities for the use of ICTs by persons with disabilities;[[1]](#footnote-1)

*b)* that the implementation of the relevant WSIS action lines will contribute to the achievement SDG 9 target 9.c (Significantly increase access to ICT and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020);

*c)* the need to apply accessibility principles and features in relation to telecommunication/ICT services, equipment, software and applications in order to be accessible, namely: universal design, equal access, functional equivalence and affordability;

*d)* that telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs should be achieved through the formulation of coherent policy and cooperation between government bodies, the private sector, non‑governmental organizations, civil society and persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs themselves;

*e)* the importance of coordination and exchange of information on issues concerning persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs by and between United Nations bodies concerned in order to establish a comprehensive approach to issues of accessibility;

*f)* the prevailing difference in telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs in the regions, in countries, and within each country, emphasizing that 80 per cent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries[[2]](#footnote-2), according to the United Nations Development Programme;

*g)* that women and girls with disabilities suffer multiple disadvantages, being excluded on account of their gender and their disability,

resolves to instruct the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau

1 to ensure that ITU‑D programmes, projects or activities take into account, where possible, telecommunication/ICT accessibility issues and/or are adaptable for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;

2 to promote the development and updating of tools and guidelines for use/reference by Member States in mainstreaming telecommunication/ICT accessibility issues in their national/regional policies and regulations, and the building of necessary capacity, taking into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

3 to provide assistance to Member States, as appropriate, in the establishment of their national strategies, including funding strategies, aimed at addressing the needs of persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs in terms of access to telecommunication/ICT services;

4 to continue to work closely with Member States for the sharing and dissemination of best practices, and to encourage them to submit contributions on ensuring accessibility of telecommunication/ICT services, equipment, software and applications;

5 to support the holding of seminars, symposia or forums on telecommunication/ICT accessibility, involving a wide range of stakeholders, and also support the preparation of outcome documents that address telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;

6 to collaborate and cooperate with relevant United Nations entities with a mandate to address accessibility issues and with international and regional organizations for persons with disabilities in order to support the social and economic inclusion of persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs through the use of telecommunications/ICTs;

7 to collaborate with ITU‑R and ITU‑T on issues of telecommunication/ICT accessibility, to take into account the outcomes of their work in preparing toolkits, guidelines and programmes for Member States on telecommunication/ICT accessibility issues and, where necessary, to report to the ITU Council on the outcomes of this collaboration;

8 to consider the development of an internship programme for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs who have expertise in the field of telecommunications/ICTs, so as to build capacity in the development of public policy to meet accessibility requirements;

9 to ensure that the needs of the communities of persons with disabilities are taken into account in the provision of telecommunication/ICT accessibility equipment, services and software;

10 to strengthen the Digital Inclusion programme to promote telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities;

further instructs the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau

1 to review, in consultation with the Secretary‑General, the accessibility of ITU services and facilities, including meetings and events, to consider taking actions, where appropriate, pursuant to UNGA Resolution 61/106, and to inform Member States and Sector Members about the implementation of such actions, as appropriate;

2 to contribute, within the scope of BDT, to uniting efforts for the implementation of the provisions of Resolution 70 (Rev. Geneva, 2022) and Resolution 175 (Rev. Dubai, 2018);

3 to provide advice to, evaluate and supervise initiatives, projects and programmes, so as to determine their impact in terms of telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, under Resolution 17 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) of this conference on regional initiatives, where appropriate;

invites the Plenipotentiary Conference

1 to build on and consolidate past accomplishments, by providing the necessary financial and human resources for the effective and sustained integration of telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs in the development activities of ITU;

2 to instruct the Secretary-General to bring this resolution to the attention of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in an effort to promote increased coordination and cooperation for development policies, programmes and projects for achieving telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, in line with the principles of universal design, equal access, functional equivalence and affordability, and fully harnessing the available tools, guidelines and standards, to eliminate obstacles and discrimination,

instructs Study Group 1 of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector

1 to assist in identifying the needs of persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs in relation to telecommunication/ICT accessible services, equipment, software and applications;

2 to assist in identifying best practices in relation to telecommunication/ICT accessible services, equipment, software and applications, on the basis of contributions from Member States, Sector Members and other stakeholders and in collaboration with ITU‑T and ITU‑R;

3 to promote the exchange of experiences and best practices in terms of accessibility of telecommunication/ICT services, equipment, software and applications for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, in order to reduce digital inequality and achieve the SDGs,

invites Member States

1 to ratify the UNCPRD and to consider the interests of persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs in the development of legal frameworks, including laws, regulations, policies and guidelines, on telecommunications/ICTs at the national and local levels, in order to support the social and economic inclusion of all members of society, taking into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

2 to mainstream telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs and to emphasize adopting a comprehensive approach to addressing the matter, which involves taking into consideration accessibility principles in a cross-cutting manner;

3 to take the relevant measures to ensure that telecommunication/ICT services, equipment, software and applications contribute to the development of telecommunication/ICT accessibility and are effectively accessible to persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;

4 to develop national legal frameworks, including laws, regulations, policies, guidelines or other national and local mechanisms for telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities, taking into account the principles of equal access, functional equivalence, affordability and universal design, in order to ensure accessibility of telecommunication/ICT services, equipment, software and applications;

5 to encourage and enable active participation by persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, both as individuals and as organizations, in the policy-making process for telecommunications/ICTs and related areas where ICTs have an impact, by ensuring the accessibility of the consultation process, meetings and/or surveys;

6 to consider establishing a government procurement policy foraccessible telecommunications/ICTs,establishing accessibility criteria;

7 to raise awareness of activities and decisions of government bodies, the private sector and non-governmental organizations in relation to ensuring telecommunication/ICT accessibility so that persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs are timeously and fully informed of new opportunities;

8 to continue strengthening the collection and analysis of data and statistics on disability related to telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs and similarly relevant indicators that will contribute to the public policy design, planning and implementation process in the area of telecommunication/ICT accessibility;

9 to facilitate the introduction and mainstreaming of telecommunication/ICT relay services[[3]](#footnote-3), captioning and audiodescription for persons with hearing, speech or vision impairments, or any combination thereof, to ensure accessibility of television programmes and digital television content;

10 to consider financial incentives on ICT devices and assistive equipment for persons with disabilities, in accordance with the national regulations on this matter;

11 to promote the development of accessible websites, in particular those of high social significance for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, such as websites for e‑government services;

12 to support the establishment of educational institutions, in particular at the primary level, other institutions and community centres with accessible equipment and to promote the accessibility of public phones;

13 to promote and undertake research and development of telecommunication/ICT accessible equipment and software, with emphasis on free and open-source software and affordable equipment and services;

14 to establish ongoing and permanent collaboration between developed and developing countries in order to exchange information, technology and best practices related to telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;

15 to participate actively in telecommunication/ICT accessibility-related studies in ITU‑D, ITU‑T and ITU‑R, and to encourage and promote self-representation by persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs in the development and standardization process, so as to ensure that their experiences, views and opinions are taken into account in all the work of the study groups;

16 to promote the development of learning and capacity-building opportunities to train persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs to use telecommunications/ICTs for their social and economic development, including through train-the-trainer courses and distance learning, for a more inclusive society;

17 to create dissemination and awareness-raising mechanisms that enable persons with disabilities to learn about the rights that can help them and how to require their enforceability, as well as policies for their benefit, current assistance technologies, and accessible equipment available on the market,

invites Sector Members

1 to consider accessibility issues, including adoption of a self-regulation approach in their activities, in the field of telecommunications/ICTs;

2 to adopt a universal design principle from an early stage when designing, producing and creating telecommunication/ICT equipment, services, software and applications, so as to avoid costly measures to adapt them for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;

3 to promote research and development on telecommunication/ICT-accessible equipment, services, software and applications, having due regard to affordability for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;

4 to collaborate with Member States for the sharing of experiences and best practices in relation to telecommunication/ICT accessibility;

5 to collaborate with Member States on dissemination and awareness-raising to enable persons with disabilities to learn about current assistance technologies, tools and accessible and affordable equipment available on the market.

1. Geneva Declaration of Principles, §§ 13 and 30; Geneva Plan of Action, §§ 9 e) and f), 19 and 23; Tunis Commitment, §§ 18 and 20; Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, § 90 c) and e). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. These include the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Telecommunication relay services enable users of different modes of communication (e.g. text, sign, speech) to interact by providing convergence between the modes of communication, usually through human operators. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)