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| **Council 2017Geneva, 15-25 May 2017** |  |
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| **Agenda item: ADM 3** | **Document C17/100-E** |
| **1 May 2017** |
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| Note by the Secretary-General |
| CONTRIBUTION FROM THE argentine republic |
| promoting the participation of SMEs in the work of itu |

I have the honour to transmit to the Member States of the Council a contribution submitted by the **Argentine Republic**.

 Houlin ZHAO
 Secretary-General

Argentine Republic

PROMOTING THE PARTICIPATION OF SMEs IN THE WORK OF ITU

Introduction

Since the announcement of the Global ICT Entrepreneurship Initiative in [Circular Letter No. 15/010](https://www.itu.int/md/S15-SG-CIR-0010/en). 15/010 in February 2015, the Argentine Administration has supported and promoted the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the work of ITU.

We are convinced that SMEs, especially in the developing countries, are essential when it comes to ensuring economic growth and facilitating development, reducing unemployment, particularly for young people, and promoting innovation and progress in the ICT sector.

This is borne out by various data relating to our country, where 99 per cent of companies are SMEs, generating over 4.1 million jobs, accounting for 70 per cent of the country's[[1]](#footnote-1) formal employment.

This is why we decided to support all initiatives looking to incorporate the potential that SMEs can bring to ITU; for example, the platform that has started to take shape as part of ITU Telecom, organized each year to provide a space for such companies to meet and interact both among themselves and with other ITU initiatives.

Likewise, since 2015 we have been proposing that ways for SMEs to participate effectively in ITU be analysed, taking their specific characteristics into account. It is thus fundamental to consider issues related to size (number of employees), revenue, country of origin (developing countries) and any other circumstance that place SMEs in a different situation compared with the other companies that form part of ITU today, be they Associates or Sector Members.

For its part, in its report the 2016 world telecommunication standardization assembly (WTSA-16), held in Yasmine Hammamet, invites the Council to tackle the question of SME participation in the work of ITU, and that of ITU-T in particular, as soon as possible.

It is also worth mentioning that the Chairman of ITU-T Study Group 20 (IoT and SC&C), in a document put forward in 2015 (Document [CWG-FHR 6/20](https://www.itu.int/md/S16-CLCWGFHRM6-C-0020/en)), proposed that a pilot trial be implemented within Study Group 20 to assess the participation of SMEs; and that the Argentine Administration submitted a contribution along the same lines in Document [CWG-FHR 6/15](https://www.itu.int/md/S16-CLCWGFHRM6-C-0015/en), in March 2016.

In this regard, the ITU secretariat submitted a report to the Council Working Group on Financial and Human Resources (CWG-FHR) in 2016 analysing the situation regarding the participation of SMEs in the work of ITU and the reasons for which such companies might or might not be interested in continuing to participate (Document [CWG-FHR-INF 7/2](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CLCWGFHRM7-INF-0002/en)).

The document was based on a telephone survey of SMEs currently associated with ITU conducted in June 2016 (at the time of the survey, there were a total of 41 associated SMEs – 32 Associates and 9 Sector Members). The document shares and reiterates many of the concerns reflected in Document [CWG-FHR5/12(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S15-CLCWGFHRM5-C-0012/en) submitted by our country to the meeting of CWG-FHR in October 2015, namely:

General data:

• Most of the SMEs currently associated participate in the activities of ITU-T (68%);

• Sixty-nine per cent of them come from western Europe, 28 per cent from North America (United States or Canada) and only 3 per cent (1 SME) from the Arab region;

• There are practically no associated SMEs from developing countries.

Benefits of participation (according to the SMEs themselves):

• Access to ITU products and publications (Recommendations, mailing lists, publications);

• Access to ITU services (webpage, TIES account, databases);

• Membership of ITU, which opens the way when it comes to forming associations and alliances, and networking.

Difficulties regarding participation (according to the SMEs themselves):

• Costs associated with participation in the meetings (costs of travel and stay);

• Insufficient human resources to deal with the variety of topics and number of meetings each year;

• Insufficient time to attend meetings;

• Cost of participation (membership).

Some recommendations (from the SMEs themselves):

• Organize information meetings solely for SMEs;

• Plan meetings to include related events in the same week;

• Reduce the cost of membership;

• Facilitate the availability of and access to information on the webpage.

As a consequence, at this Council-17 meeting CWG-FHR recommends that note be taken of the information provided and that consideration be given to putting forward a proposal for the matter to be further pursued.

In this regard, we consider that the activities carried out by business associations and/or chambers of commerce both national and regional to promote the growth and development of SMEs should be analysed, as they could also contribute to disseminating information on ITU activities and promoting SME participation in its work.

In principle, a way forward could be to gather information on the business associations and/or chambers of commerce in the different regions in order to then analyse the possibility of organizing joint events designed to introduce the SMEs to the world of ITU, with a view to arousing interest in its work and identifying possible areas of collaboration; activities could also be organized focused on more specific matters related to the ITU-T study groups and/or other ITU initiatives, such as the ITU Telecom SME Platform, the Smart ABC Initiative, and so forth.

Proposal

Based on the information provided, it is proposed to move ahead as follows:

• Identify options for the effective participation of SMEs in the work of ITU, which should include assessing the following (not exclusive):

• Implementation of a pilot project in a study group yet to be identified;

• Participation through national and/or regional business associations and/or chambers of commerce;

• Identification of criteria defining SMEs with a view to their participation as ITU associates, taking their specific characteristics into account, above all if they come from developing countries.

• Promote more extensively those ITU activities that are focused on SME participation, especially in the developing countries, so that the latter can disseminate information on the activities among the business associations and/or chambers of commerce, with the aim of assessing the potential for collaboration between ITU and SMEs.

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1. Source: Ministry of Production of the Argentine Republic <http://www.produccion.gob.ar/pymes/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)