|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Ad Hoc Group of the CWG-FHR on the ITU Regional Presence Review****Second meeting - Virtual, 20 April 2021** |  |
|  |  |
|  | **Document CWG-FHR-AH-RegPres-2/4-E** |
| **13 April 2021** |
| **English only** |

Contribution by Australia

ITU Regional Presence Review

|  |
| --- |
| SummaryThis document provides Australia’s views on the strategic positioning of the ITU regional presence.Action requiredThat this contribution is presented to the Ad Hoc Group of the CWG-FHR for their consideration and discussion.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_References[Document CWG-FHR 12/4](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CWGFHR12-C-0004/en) “Review of ITU Regional Presence – Report by PwC”  |

The review of the ITU’s regional presence is an important moment for the Union and its members to evaluate how the ITU’s regional presence can best deliver on the goals of the organisation in accordance with its mandate. To this end, the review also provides an opportunity to ensure the ITU is fit for purpose and can provide specialised expertise and assistance in order to meet the needs of the regions.

The report prepared by PwC (document C20/74) provides important external insights on the ITU’s regional presence and is a useful input into the review process. Australia considers the evaluation criteria utilised by PwC (coherence, control, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, relevance and sustainability) as valuable when assessing options for the regional presence going forward.

However, Australia considers the PwC report as only one element (albeit significant) in the review process. In order to ensure there is cohesion across the organisation, we support the report’s assertion of the need to clarify the role of the ITU regional network within the ITU’s strategic framework and key policy documents which would allow regional offices have clear direction and objectives.

In addition to the Secretariat’s first reaction to PwC’s report (document CWG-FHRE-12/9), we would welcome further reflections on how the regional presence can best support mandate delivery in a coherent and coordinated manner and request the ITU Secretariat outline these reflections to members.

At this point, we consider the transition to a discussion designed to take decisions on resource allocation a missed opportunity. Instead, we should first focus on the specific objectives of the ITU globally and regionally, and how the regional presence assists with delivering these objectives in accordance with the ITU’s mandate. We consider a discussion which progresses straight to the location, number and level of staffing to be premature.

**UN Governance & Reform**

Overall, Australia welcomes the PwC report noting the review was conducted against the backdrop of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Agenda and the reform of the UN Development system (UNDS). Both agendas are inducing a shift in the expected role and ways of working of UN agencies at country level and continue to offer opportunities for increased effectiveness and efficiency.

In a resource constrained environment, by aligning more closely with UNDS the ITU could increase its impact through regional partnerships, common resource mobilization and reduced overheads, including utilisation of common administrative and logistical support functions. Not only could the ITU benefit from the expertise of partner organisations, it could also become a partner of choice in the delivery of multi-agency programs and subsequently deliver valuable outcomes for the regions. We reiterate our view that UN agencies should be transparent and accountable, and operate within their means.

As well as being a specialised agency, the ITU is one of the UN SDG agencies, and we are keen to see closer and more effective cooperation between these agencies to help deliver on the SDG agenda and to build back better after COVID. This also speaks to the suggested opportunity (in the report) to leverage the upcoming review of UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) in 131 countries to support the ITU to be recognised as a key contributor within the UN Family.

**Presence in the Asia Pacific**

It is important the ITU strikes the right balance in the Asia-Pacific. Australia’s key considerations for the ITU’s presence in the Pacific include our UN reform priorities, alignment with the delivery of the ITU’s mandate underscored by a clearly defined vision for the regional presence, and ensuring regional membership views are understood and promoted effectively in the organisation.

Australia welcomes the recognition that Pacific member countries are confronted by particularly difficult circumstances and require a more structured form of assistance. In terms of being fit for purpose, the review of alignment between the geographical distribution of the current regional presence and thematic needs is welcome.

We agree with interviewees (from the Geneva Group and donors) that there is a need to “define explicit criteria detailing on which basis a regional presence should be set up. A governance process should also be established to ensure that these criteria (and, hence, the effectiveness of the regional presence) can be regularly reviewed” (page 105).  Whether this points to a need to create a presence in the Pacific requires further consideration. Australia would like to see the UN “do more” to address the unique challenges in the Pacific. Therefore, we would welcome an increased ITU presence should the appropriate criteria be met to ensure there is cohesion across the organisation, and so regional offices have clear direction and objectives, and respond effectively to the unique circumstances of the countries they will be serving.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_