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|  | **Document CWG-FHR-16/10-E** |
| **11 September 2023** |
| **English only** |
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| Contribution by the secretariat | |
| STRENGTHENING THE REGIONAL PRESENCE – CRITERIA FOR ESTABLISHING FUTURE AREA OFFICES | |
| **Purpose**  To provide input to CWG-FHR on criteria to guide future deliberations on establishing future ITU regional and area offices  **Action required**  CWG-FHR is requested to consider and recommend for approval by Council, possible criteria which will guide ITU in establishing future regional and area offices, for consideration by Council 2024.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  [Document C23/68](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0068/en) – Contribution from Australia on Strategic Approach to ITU’s Regional Presence  [Resolution 25](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-025-E.pdf) (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) Strengthening the ITU Regional Presence  [Resolution 71](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-071-E.pdf) (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) ITU Strategic Plan 2024-2027  [Decision 5](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/DEC-005-E.pdf) (Rev. Bucharest, 2022), Annex 2 Measures for improving ITU’s efficiency and reducing its expenses  [CWG-FHR 13/2 + Annexes](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CWGFHR13-C-0002/en) “Report of the Ad Hoc Group of CWG-FHR on ITU regional presence” including Annexes (Chart 4 – Recommendations requiring Council Decisions)  [Document C20/74](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0074/en) Review of ITU Regional Presence – Report by PwC (2020) | |

1. **Background**

Document C23/68 to the 2023 session of ITU Council noted the continued need to improve delivery by ITU’s regional presence and proposed that to ensure successful delivery of the strategic goals outlined in the ITU Strategic Plan over the period of 2024-2027 and beyond, the Union should look to address remaining gaps in its regional presence as a priority.

The document proposed that the Council **continue considering** ways to strengthen ITU regional presence and **address** existing gaps to ensure ITU Members’ needs are adequately supported; and **task** the Council Working Group on Financial and Human Resources (CWG-FHR) with recommending explicit criteria to guide future deliberations on establishing regional and area offices for the decision at the next Council session.

Document C23/68 noted that the cumulative analysis and initiatives carried out in the past decade (for example, outcomes of the UN Joint Inspection Unit report and PWC review; discussions and subsequent recommendations by CWG-FHR and its ad-hoc group on ITU regional presence; regular reviews of ITU regional and area offices; and the recent experience of establishing an area office in India) provide ample information to commence this work.

Council invited CWG-FHR to prepare criteria to guide future deliberations on expansions to ITU’s regional presence, for consideration at Council-24.

1. **Assessment of Possible Gaps in ITU Regional Presence Coverage**

Expansion of ITU’s regional presence should only be considered where there are verified gaps in ITU’s coverage which comprise sufficient countries to justify the expansion. An assessment should be conducted to determine whether there are any gaps in the current coverage of ITU’s regional presence. The following criteria should be used to assess coverage of each member state:

1. Does the member state’s level of digital development require in-country assistance from the ITU? Matters to be considered in determining this include level of meaningful connectivity, digital regulatory maturity and cybersecurity readiness.
2. Does ITU’s regional presence provideeffectivecoverage in the geographical area where the member state is situated?
3. Can the member state’s needs be covered from one of ITU’s existing offices (through increase in or reassignment of resources)?

If the assessment of the above criteria identifies a geographical gap where multiple countries are not effectively covered, this should be identified as a potential “area” for coverage by ITU, which may be suitable for a new ITU presence.

1. **Criteria for Opening of New Area or Regional Offices**

Once it is determined that there is a geographical area comprising multiple countries which cannot effectively be addressed from an existing office, the next step is to determine whether it would be appropriate to expand ITU’s regional presence to address that gap, and where the ITU presence in the area should be situated.

In its report on ITU’s Regional Presence which was delivered to ITU Council in its 2020 session, PwC recommended an action plan for the strengthening of ITU’s Regional Presence with four implementation streams, broken down into fifteen recommendations and 50 supporting actions. While the majority of the PwC recommendations are currently under implementation having been within the ability of the Secretariat to implement, a number of Recommendations required council decisions and are not yet approved for implementation.

One of those recommendations (section 6.2.3 of the PwC Report) notes that the localisation of a Regional Office (RO) or Area Office (AO) should be defined in light of its ability to deliver on the positioning of the regional presence as a ‘shaper’ or ‘doer’ role, and that the opening of a new office should be carefully considered taking into account the resource limitations. PwC proposed a set of criteria for determining the opening of a new office and/or reconsideration of existing offices.

Having reviewed the criteria outlined by PwC, the following criteria are presented for consideration of Council regarding the opening of a new presence in an area where a gap has been identified:

**Relevance** – the proposed new location should improve ITU's ability to generate impact across several countries.

At least half of the countries should have demonstratable need for support from ITU (as measured by ITU statistics) in at least 3 of the following areas:

* + 1. Affordability – have not met mobile/broadband affordability targets (2% GNI)
    2. Digital regulation maturity below G3
    3. Infrastructure coverage -
       1. Mobile – Population covered by at least 3G mobile < 100%
       2. Broadband – Population within 10 km of OFTN < 50%
    4. Statistics gaps – inability to collect internationally harmonized ICT statistics
    5. Demonstrated need for Digital Skills Capacity Building
    6. Cybersecurity: GCI score < 50

**Exclusivity** – the suggested location does not duplicate any existing presence at sub-regional level.

**Feasibility** – Sufficient resources can be secured to establish the office and support a minimum critical mass of technical skills for an extended period, and the host country has the resources and commitment to meet the obligations required to host an ITU office.

**Security -** The location should be assessed by UNDSS as having a low security level, i.e. the location should not represent any specific threat to staff safety and business continuity.

**Proximity** – Efficient geographical proximity to countries in need, particularly LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS, and good access to regional or sub-regional hubs of other UN Agencies and/or a Regional Telecom Organisation.

**Accessibility** – the suggested location provides access to an airline hub with extensive international connections (facilitating external access) and direct connections with the other countries in the sub-region.

Each country in the area for coverage should be considered using the following criteria, and a comparative assessment used to identify the suitable locations for ITU’s presence in the area, for consideration by Council.

1. **Scope of the Proposed Presence**

Having determined that an additional presence of ITU is desirable, and identifying the possible locations of the ITU presence, it should be determined what form the presence would take. This may involve the opening of a new regional or area office or partnering with other international agencies or entities to increase ITU’s activities in the area.

Council is requested to consider proposals from the secretariat to cover the relevant area based on the following:

1. Number of countries to be covered
2. Assessment of country needs
3. Available financial and human resources
4. Expressions of interest from member states in the area to host ITU’s presence

**5. Conclusion**

CWG-FHR is asked to consider the above and determine appropriate criteria for recommendation to Council.

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