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| **Agenda item: PL 2** | **Document C24/66-E** |
| **3 May 2024** |
| **Original: English** |
| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| Strengthening the Regional Presence - Criteria for Establishing Future Regional and Area Offices | |
| **Purpose**  This document summarizes the debates that have taken place so far on the criteria for the establishment of future regional and area offices. It will also be submitted to TDAG and to the ISCG for their meeting in May 2024, and will be updated accordingly.  **Action required by the Council**  The Council is invited to **consider** this document.  **Relevant link(s) with the Strategic Plan**  Excellence in human resources and organizational innovation.  **Financial implications**  Within the approved budget 2024-2025.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**   * [D22-TDAG31-C-0021](https://www.itu.int/md/D22-TDAG31-C-0021/en) - Incoming LS - Liaison Statement to TDAG and ISCG on the criteria for establishing future area offices. * [CWG-FHR-16/10](https://www.itu.int/md/meetingdoc.asp?lang=en&parent=S23-CWGFHR16-C-0010) - Strengthening the Regional Presence - Criteria for Establishing Future Area Offices, submitted by the Secretary-General. * [CWG-FHR-16/24(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/meetingdoc.asp?lang=en&parent=S23-CWGFHR16-C-0024) - Multi-country contribution - The Proposal for Establishing Future Area Offices, from Algeria, China, Cuba, Russian Federation and South Africa | |

**1. Introduction and Summary of previous discussions**

1.1 The Council Working Group on Financial and Human Resources (CWG-FHR), during its meeting on 11-13 October 2023, examined and discussed briefly the following two documents, both on the topic of establishing criteria for the creation of future area offices:

* [CWG-FHR-16/10](https://www.itu.int/md/meetingdoc.asp?lang=en&parent=S23-CWGFHR16-C-0010) - Strengthening the Regional Presence - Criteria for Establishing Future Area Offices, submitted by the Secretary-General.
* [CWG-FHR-16/24(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/meetingdoc.asp?lang=en&parent=S23-CWGFHR16-C-0024) - Multi-country contribution - The Proposal for Establishing Future Area Offices, from Algeria, China, Cuba, Russian Federation and South Africa

1.2 The documents were sent to the next CWG-FHR meeting, in January 2024, for continued discussions and possible deliberation on a proposal to be sent to the Council.

1.3 The CWG-FHR, during its meeting on 24-26 January 2024, resolved the following:

1.3.1 Some Member States motioned for the report to be forwarded to the Council for approval while others expected additional information from the advisory committee, coordination with other ITU Sectors, and enhanced overall fidelity in the document. It was noted that the proposed criteria should be measurable and that it should incorporate the role of regional organizations. After further general discussions on the topic, it was decided that the CWG-FHR would send a Liaison Statement to TDAG and to the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), asking the advisory group and ISCG to review and provide any feedback to the next meeting of the Council.

**2. Summary of documents in reference**

2.1 **CWG-FHR-16/10**

2.1.1 The document established that the expansion of ITU’s regional presence should 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. If the assessment 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.

2.1.2 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.

2.1.3 The following criteria are presented 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.
* **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 Organization.
* **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.

2.1.4 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.

2.2 **CWG-FHR-16/24(Rev.1)**

2.2.1 The document establishes that the regional presence plays a vital role in the achievement of ITU’s mission, enhancing the Union’s understanding of local contexts and responding to countries’ needs effectively in particular, the role of the ITU regional and area offices is to assist countries in the regions in many areas, such as in execution of and follow-up to projects, including ones related to the regional initiatives, bridging the standardization gap, capacity building related to frequency management, updating the regions on ITU activities and strengthening collaboration with regional telecommunication organizations.

2.2.2 The document provides views on the support provided by ITU’s development sector through the regional presence. It notes that most of the recommendations made to strengthen the regional presence have been implemented or are in progress, and that the results have improved steadily since 2019.

2.2.3 The document makes the following proposals:

1. The establishment of area offices should comprehensively consider various factors, including the host country’s willingness, the needs from the relevant areas, the financial resources availability, geography representative etc. and should also take the previous experience into account.
2. Considering the BDT is responsible for regional and area offices, the standards for establishing area offices should be fully reviewed and discussed in TDAG and the future Council, in order to investigate and get full facts and knowledge about the potential gap in serving member states and propose process and necessary standards and indicators accordingly in each region and be reported back to a future Council for approval.
3. The main purpose for establishment of area offices is to provide better services to Member States which are in need of assistance. Any standards to be developed for the establishment of area office should fulfil this objective.
4. The establishment of area offices should consider social and economic development of the countries intended to be served, with a particular priority to area offices serving the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

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