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|  | **Document CWG-FHR-19/2-E** |
| **9 September 2024** |
| **English only** |
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| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| STRENGTHENING REGIONAL PRESENCE IMPLEMENTATION | |
| **Purpose**  This document reports on the measures undertaken by the secretariat in the effort to strengthen ITU’s regional presence, in alignment with ITU Strategic Plan as well as the Kigali Action Plan.  **Action required**  The Council Working Group on financial and human resources is invited to **note** this report.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  *Resolution* [*25 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022)*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-025-e.pdf) *of the Plenipotentiary Conference;  Council Documents* [*C24/79*](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0079/en)*,* [*C24/98*](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0098/en) *and* [*C24/25*](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0025/en)*; Documents* [*TDAG-24/7(Rev.1)*](https://www.itu.int/md/D22-TDAG31-C-0007/en) *and* [*TDAG-24/12*](https://www.itu.int/md/D22-TDAG31-C-0012/en) | |

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has been actively working to enhance its regional presence, aiming to strengthen the delivery of support through projects and other operational plan activities to Member States in a timely, effective, and impactful manner. Well planned and implemented interventions will attract extra-budgetary funding from donors for the implementation of projects including regional initiatives. The regional offices play a crucial role in this context, serving as the frontline for ITU’s engagement with local stakeholders and governments. Here are some key examples of the positive impact resulting with measures taken to strengthen regional presence in 2023 and 2024 ([Document TDAG-24/2](https://www.itu.int/md/D22-TDAG31-C-0002/en) provides detailed information):

# 1 Membership engagement and implementation of projects and operational plans

– **Regional development forums**: In 2023 and early 2024, ITU conducted six regional Development Forums which attracted over 1 500 stakeholders globally. These forums focus on implementing regional projects aligned with global ICT development goals, such as the Kigali Action Plan which supports digital development in alignment with the UN 2030 Agenda. This decentralizes ITU’s efforts, tailoring them to regional needs while promoting active participation and contribution from member countries.

– **Field office coordination**: ITU’s Regional and Area Offices have been coordinating the implementation of operational plans within their respective regions. This includes the implementation of country specific operational plan activities based on the ITU-D priority topics adopted at WTDC-22 (affordable connectivity, creating an enabling environment, digital transformation, resource mobilization and international cooperation, and building trust and confidence in the use of ICTs) and regional initiatives.

– **Joint capacity building initiatives**: The regional offices often facilitate capacity-building workshops and seminars designed to empower local professionals and stakeholders in the telecommunications sector. These initiatives are crucial for upskilling the workforce and ensuring that regional policies and technologies align with international standards, thereby fostering a more cooperative environment for project development and implementation.

– **Stakeholder engagement**: Through its regional offices, ITU actively engages with various stakeholders, including governments, private sector entities, and non-governmental organizations. This engagement is critical to understanding regional specifics and enhances ITU’s ability to tailor its initiatives to meet local needs more effectively. Such engagement also serves as a platform to discuss voluntary contributions and partnerships, crucial for sustaining and expanding ITU’s projects globally. Furthermore, the regional offices are in close collaboration with the regional regulatory authorities in each region, aligning priorities.

– **Engagement with funding agencies**: The regional offices have been closely coordinating and engaging with funding and donor agencies seeking opportunities for national, regional and global project funding. This has been key and critical to the work of the union according to the global trends.

– **On-going projects**: During 2023, BDT implemented eighty-seven projects globally, valued at CHF 106.4 million. Table 1 presents the overall distribution of this portfolio by region and the overview of (1) the funds mobilized to support the implementation of these projects, (2) the seed funding allocated by ITU from either the ICT Development Fund (ICT-DF), or other ITU Funds to support the implementation of WTDC-17 and WTDC-22 Regional Initiatives (RIs)[[1]](#footnote-1).

Table 1

Overview of on-going ITU projects by region   
(figures in k CHF)

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Region | Number of projects | Funding from partners | ITU funds  (ICT-DF) | ITU funds  (RIs) | Total project funding |
| AFR | 13 | 11 732.4 | 938.7 | 670.0 | **13 913.1** |
| AMS | 15 | 40 112.6 | 158.6 | 667.5 | **41 008.4** |
| ARB | 7 | 4 311.1 | 662.2 | 88.0 | **5 061.3** |
| ASP | 14 | 6 948.8 | 345.4 | 440.0 | **7 909.2** |
| CIS | 3 | 253.7 |  | 443.8 | **697.5** |
| EUR | 2 | 3 642.5 |  | 47.5 | **3 690.1** |
| MUL(\*) | 33 | 27 794.1 | 4 394.6 | 1 551.8 | **34 122.8** |
| **Total** | **87** | **94 795.3** | **6 499.5** | **3 908.7** | **106 402.4** |
| (\*) Multi-regional projects benefiting all regions. | | | | | |

More details on ITU-D projects and implementation can be found in Document [TDAG‑24/7(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/D22-TDAG31-C-0007/en).

– **ITU-D Operational Plan**[[2]](#footnote-2) is aligned with the structure of the strategic plan for the Union for 2024-2027. The structure follows Kigali Action Plan (KAP), outlining the ITU-D Priorities and Enablers, and their corresponding outcomes, products and services as well as the performance indicators to measure their achievement level produced by the activities of the Sector. Currently, a total of one hundred and twenty-four (124) activities are being deployed globally and across regions. To enhance implementation, synergies are sought among regional outputs, as well as between regional and global initiatives, in collaboration with other ITU Bureaux and the General Secretariat.

The effectiveness of ITU’s regional activities significantly contributes to its global mission of connecting the world and fostering sustainable digital transformation. These efforts are strategically designed to ensure that ITU remains responsive to the fast-evolving needs of digital economies and societies worldwide.

# 2 Implementation of discussions at Council-24 on Strengthening Regional Presence

Council 2024 discussed Documents [C24/79](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0079/en) and [C24/98](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0098/en), containing a series of proposals to be undertaken with a view of strengthening ITU’s Regional Presence.

The following proposals, among others, were put forward during the first plenary meeting:

– improvements to recruitment processes and tools in Regional and Area Offices

– strengthening of project management expertise in the Regional Offices

– need for explicit alignment of the activities of the Regional and Area Offices with the goals and priorities outlined in the ITU Strategic Plan and the WTDC Action Plan, including its Framework and associated KPIs

– timely reporting of financial information for projects

– need for guidelines for wider cooperation between ITU and countries to strengthen cooperation and potentially attract more voluntary contributions for project planning and implementation.

**• Strengthening Human Resources at Area and Regional Offices:** the secretariat has undertaken measures to implement actions to strengthen regional presence, some of which were reported by the Director of BDT at the second plenary meeting of Council-24 including; the upgrading of general service posts to P2 level and the creation of “project implementation support lead” posts to support project managers in their work; locating project managers in the regions where the projects are implemented; re-establishment of a dedicated division to address the needs and challenges of least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing states (LLDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS).

Document [C24/98](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0098/en) stressed the need for regional offices to have staff from the three Sectors of the Union, particularly dedicated staff from the Standardization and Radiocommunication Sectors. This is currently being implemented. As a pilot, five staff funded by TSB have been deployed to the Africa, Arab States and Asia Pacific regional offices.

More details on the improvement of recruitments processes will be incorporated in the report of the transformation initiative.

**• Budget allocation – Projects and Operational Plans:** concerning the proposal on the level and allocation of funding for the regional offices, as indicated above and also expressed by the Director of BDT during the meeting, the allocation of the operational plan budget was established following a straight-line method, treating all regions the same (see Document [TDAG-24/12](https://www.itu.int/md/D22-TDAG31-C-0012/en)). However, projects funded by donors are developed and implemented in accordance with donor priority countries and regions.

Projects funded by ITU are also based on Member States needs taking into account equal regional and geographical distribution. Global projects which constitute the bulk of BDT projects, benefit all the regions and all Member States.

**• Alignment with the ITU Strategic Plan:** concerning alignment with the Union’s strategic direction, currently all the activities delivered under the ITU-D Operational Plan are aligned with the ITU strategic plan and strategic goals as well as the Kigali Action Plan (WTDC) (each with KPIs at the outcome and output levels) as presented at the 31st meeting of TDAG, 23-24 May 2024.

# 3 Ongoing review of ITU’s Regional Presence

# Based on the continuous review being undertaken by BDT management, BDT continues to undertake various measures to strengthen the work at ITU´s Field Offices, based on the evolving workload, Member States needs and emerging opportunities arising from stakeholder engagement e.g. UN Country team engagement.

# On the implementation of projects and operational plan activities at regional level, the recent BDT structural realignment/reorganization includes, among others, the creation of three P5 posts (Projects Implementation Support Leads), within the Field Operations Coordination Department, to specifically support projects managers in regional offices to more implement projects on the ground more effectively, efficiently, and do so in a timely manner. BDT has also decided to recruit and locate project managers in the field in order to reinforce staff. This is important as the number of new projects has increased thanks to the successful resource mobilization for the implementation of attractive results-oriented projects.

# The new organization structure also includes the upgrade of G6 posts to P2 in regional offices to strengthen collaboration and coordination with the UN country teams. Further, five staff funded by TSB have been deployed to the Africa, Arab States and Asia Pacific regional offices in an effort to increase synergies with the other bureaux of ITU, namely radiocommunication and standardization.

# BDT continues to undertake on a quarterly basis the review of both ITU-D projects and the Operational Plan activities from results-based management perspectives across the regions and in individual countries.

# 4 The Regional Presence dashboard

# The Regional Presence Dashboard is currently under review and should be ready before the Council Working Group on financial and human resources in October. A revision to this document may be required to include the dashboard.

# 5 Implementation of a risk-based business continuity & crisis management response for ITU global operations, at Headquarters and its field offices

– It is recalled that at its 2016 session, the Council requested that physical Security Audit Missions (SAMs) be undertaken at ITU Field Offices to ensure ITU's Duty of Care. This was done through the implementation of mandatory compliance requirements connected to the UN country security risk mitigation measures (SRM). In 2017, the Council (C17) approved the Organization Resilience Management System (ORMS) project in compliance with the UN policies and procedures instructing the creation and implementation of a risk-based Business Continuity & Crisis Management response for ITU global operations.

In 2022, the Council (C22) requested that all Regional/Area/Liaison offices, be visited by the ORMS Unit Coordinator to ensure that Business Continuity (BC) & Crisis Management (CM) Planning were prepared. The ORMS Coordinator undertook at that time a review and update of the previous 2016-17 SAM compliance reports for each field office. Finally, in 2023, the Council (C23) requested the implementation of both ICT Infrastructure and cybersecurity audits at each field office, to determine risks and recommend mitigation measures to ensure a similar level of protection as is found at the ITU Headquarters (HQ) premises (leveraging ITU’s digital transformation initiative, to undertake visits to all offices to assess IT infrastructure vulnerabilities).

– Based on the different Security Assessment Mission reports and given that most field offices required to be SRM compliant, in terms of having standardized physical security technology equipment installations deployed in each location (this equipment installations can be monitored and centrally supported, from the HQ premises, on a 24/7 basis). The first ICT infrastructure audits and equipment installations of this new standardized technology was done in December 2023 in the New Delhi Area Office, and since that time in 2024, the Regional Offices in Ethiopia and Egypt were also finalized. Concerning cybersecurity, the first audit was also undertaken in early September, at the ITU Regional Office for Africa. Furthermore in 2024, three other Regional and Area Offices are planned to have these installations, with the remainder of regional and area offices to be attended to in 2025 (this plan is estimated to contain about 195 staff workdays to complete).

– Moreover, these types of deployments will ensure staff globally, no matter if they work at HQ or in a Field Office that actionable preventive and responsive risk mitigation measures for their work environment have been provided.

– Lastly, the ITU has an Interagency Cooperation Agreement with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to deploy a Crisis Communications System, known as SCAAN, which will enter into a second 5-year period agreement. Indeed, SCAAN has proven to be a vital resilience resource, offering 24/7 support and reassurance to staff members, serving as an effective tool for crisis communications between the Union, its personnel, and the UN security management system. Currently, approximately 750 ITU staff are registered users of SCAAN who use the application globally, providing an efficient, user-friendly means of communication for personal safety and security, whether at HQ, Field Offices or on mission anywhere in the world.

The Council Working Group on financial and human resources is invited to note this report.

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1. Document [TDAG-24/7(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/D22-TDAG31-C-0007/en) on ITU-D Projects. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Document [TDAG-24/12](https://www.itu.int/md/D22-TDAG31-C-0012/en) on ITU-D Operational Plan 2024. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)