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| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| LIAISON STATEMENT ON THE SECOND SUBMISSION OF TSAG TO THE COUNCIL WORKING GROUP FOR STRATEGIC AND FINANCIAL PLANS | |
| **Purpose**  This liaison statement provides pertinent updates to the work of TSAG on strategic planning based on the decisions of WTSA-24, as well as further analysis of the points raised in the first liaison statement from TSAG to the CWG-SFP meeting held in October 2024.  **Action required**  The Council Working Group for strategic and financial plans 2028-2031 is invited to **consider** this document.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  [*CWG-SFP website*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/CWG-SFP-2028-2031/Pages/default.aspx)*;* *Document* [*CWG-SFP-1/7*](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CWGSFP1-C-0007/en) | |

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| **Question(s):** | | RG-SOP | | | E-meeting, 11 December 2024 |
| **LS** | | | | | |
| **Source:** | | Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group (TSAG) | | | |
| **Title:** | | LS on the Second Submission of TSAG to the Council Working Group for strategic and financial plans 2028-2031 | | | |
| **LIAISON STATEMENT** | | | | | |
| **For action to:** | | | CWG-SFP | | |
| **For information to:** | | | ITU-T Study Groups, ISCG, TDAG, RAG | | |
| **Approval:** | | | TSAG Rapporteur Group on Strategic and Operational Planning (RG-SOP) e-meeting (11 December 2024) | | |
| **Deadline:** | | | 1 May 2025 | | |
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| **Abstract:** | The purpose of the second Liaison Statement (LS) of TSAG to the Council Working Group for strategic and financial plans 2028-2031 (CWG-SFP) is two-fold. One is to provide pertinent updates to the work of TSAG on strategic planning based on the decisions of WTSA-24. The second is to provide a further analysis of the points raised in the first LS from TSAG for the meeting of CWG-SFP held in October 2024. |

Decisions of WTSA-24

One of the key decisions taken by the Assembly held from 15 to 25 October 2024 was the adoption of new Resolution 108, Strategic planning in ITU-T. Pertinent actions highlighted in the Resolution include the following:

– to continue improving the alignment between ITU-T operational plan and the strategic plan of the Union, in order to enhance and position the standardization sector in the overall ITU strategy;

– to develop a vision, strategic priorities and action plan, including an ITU-T value proposition, to reflect a strategic approach for ITU-T continuous evolution and improvement, in collaboration with all the ITU-T stakeholders including the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau (TSB);

– to include in the operational plan consideration of key enablers of success in the ITU-T results framework, including industry engagement, a fit-for-purpose ITU-T study groups structure and work programmes, effective promotion and coordination, reinvigorated high-level, private sector executive meetings, TSB secretariat support, ITU-T website, effective and up to date ITU-T electronic meeting platforms and related governance and management, business continuity, among others;

– to mainstream RBM in ITU-T, including through a results-based operational plan aligned with ITU strategy, while considering TSB support for the regional presence, and providing regular reporting to TSAG, CWG-SFP and to the Council, on actions planned and undertaken in that regard;

– to support strategic planning of ITU-T by developing an ITU-T risk management approach that considers strategic and operational risks and associated mitigation measures.

The importance of linking strategic and operational planning, as well as financial planning, in ITU

With reference to the Strategic Plan for the Union, 2024-2027, as was highlighted in the first submission to the CWG by means of the TSAG LS, was the need to elaborate in the next Strategic Plan for the Union, 2028-2031 the linkage of the various planning elements. This is clearly emphasized in Resolution 151 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), Improvement of results-based management in ITU). The strategic plan for the Union should link the strategic goals to the achievement of the ITU’s overall mission by undertaking priority actions and by the delivery of outputs (associated with the operational plans). The process of bottom-up budgeting, integrating resources, activities and outputs within the context of RBM requires that strategic and operational planning be linked with financial planning and budgeting.

It is recommended that narrative text be developed which clearly and comprehensively links the pertinent planning elements.

Structure of the current Strategic Plan

Linkage between goals, thematic priorities, products and services, enablers and strategic goals and targets/thematic priorities and outcomes

While there are no substantive comments conceptually as far as the overall structure is concerned, i.e. the presentation of Goals, Thematic Priorities, Products and Services, Enablers and Strategic Goals and Targets/Thematic Priorities and Outcomes in the current Strategic Plan, as indicated above a comprehensive explanation of how these concepts are linked would enhance the overall understanding of how overall planning is implemented in ITU.

Products and services

As far as the identification of Products and Services is concerned, it is suggested that these be identified as “Outputs”, thereby clarifying the linkage with operational planning. While there is no objection to using the term “Outcomes” as part of the RBM process, the distinction between Outputs and Outcomes needs to be made to ensure that the process is fully understood.

Formulation of thematic priority #2 (International Numbering Resources)

No conclusion has been reached yet on an alternative formulation for TP#2 but suffice it to say at this point that a direct repetition between the Thematic Priorities and the Outputs of the Operational Plans can result in confusion in understanding the relationship between these elements. As far as International Numbering Resources is concerned, however, its importance is recognized and reflected as an Ouput in the ITU-T Operational Plan. An alternative formulation is under discussion in TSAG.

Thematic priorities/outcomes

As defined in the current Strategic Plan, Outcomes are defined as “Key results the Union aims to achieve under its thematic priorities”. This compares to the definition of “Outputs” (defined in Annex 3 (Glossary of Terms) in the Strategic Plan) as “Outputs are the final tangible results, deliverables, products and services achieved by the Union in the implementation of the operational plans. Outputs are cost objects and are represented in the applicable cost-accounting system by internal orders. Outputs will be defined and measured in operational plans for each Sector and the General Secretariat”.

Thematic priority “enabling environment”

In relation to Thematic Priority “Enabling Environment”, an “Outcome” is listed as:

“Enhanced ability of all countries, in particular developing countries, to develop and implement strategies, policies and practices for digital inclusion, access and use telecommunications/ICTs, implement, and participate in the development of, ITU's international standards, recommendations, best practices and regulations”. It is further broken down as “Bridging the standardization gap – enhanced ability of all countries, in particular developing countries, to develop, access, implement and influence ITU-T recommendations”.

The outcome indicators include the following:

Total number of ITU-T study group leadership positions held (by level of development)

Total number of ITU-T study group meetings/participants – Total number of countries represented in ITU-T study group meetings (by level of development) – Total number of contributions submitted to ITU-T study group meetings (by level of development of the country of the contributing organization) – Total number of ITU-T recommendation downloads – Total number of workshops and other events in support of ITU-T study groups/ participants.

In the first instance, a key question is whether the Outcome description, or part thereof, is an Outcome or Output. Secondly, the KPIs seem more appropriate to be included in the evaluations of the operational plans. For ITU-T, there are references to “bridging the standardization gap” and to the ITU-T study groups, both of which are distinct Outputs of the ITU-T operational plan.

Value proposition of ITU

As a final observation, Annex 2 to Resolution 71 (Situational analysis), section 2.4 refers to “Assessing ITU’s value proposition and its organizational effectiveness”. The following comments are offered on this section to reflect the ITU-T perspective on this important element.

In the organization and follow-up to the Industry Engagement Workshop held in April 2024, it was observed that the value proposition of ITU-T should be to safeguard global alignments of the different standards organizations. ITU-T benefits from a world-leading process based on consensus, balanced IPR policy, inclusivity, and its unique industry-government bridge, and should focus on cooperation and coordination.

Moreover, the Industry Engagement Action Plan approved by TSAG in 2024 includes an element to identify value propositions to enhance participation and retention of industry as Sector Members and Associates (including SMEs) in ITU-T. It is noted that a clearer statement of the ITU-T value proposition should be promoted by means of, for example, the ITU-T Homepage and the ITU-T portion of the Strategic Plan.

With regard to the Homepage on the ITU-T value proposition, the following points are highlighted:

– a unique ecosystem bringing together governments and regulators, private sector and academia;

– impartial, open standards agreed through consensus, respecting clear intellectual property policies;

– coordination with other standards development organizations to avoid possible overlaps;

– efficient processes designed to meet the needs of industry, with standards approved in as little as five weeks;

– advanced remote participation tools to save travel costs and reduce carbon footprint;

– state-of-the-art meeting facilities including premium audiovisual systems and videoconferencing rooms;

– dedicated secretariat with multilingual staff across 12 offices around the globe;

– a badge of quality and trust conferred by ITU’s United Nations status.

While section 2.4 in Annex 2 of the Strategic Plan addresses several important areas to improve ITU’s value proposition to its membership and advice to ITU management on enhancing organizational effectiveness, such as the review of ITU's regional presence, the ITU Culture and Skills project and informal consultations with members during the strategic planning process.

While it is mentioned that the feedback from the membership reinforced the need to improve internal management through results-based management and enhance transparency and accountability, there is no mention of the elements underlying the value proposition of ITU to encourage Member States to maintain or perhaps increase their contributory share to the organization, or to predispose industry or academia from either retaining or enhancing their level of financial support to ITU. It is suggested that it could be strengthened with the inclusion of some of the points outlined in the existing literature outlining the value proposition of ITU-T.

Concluding remarks

This contribution to the CWG-SFP is provided to assist in the formulation of the Strategic Plan for the Union, 2028-2031. It should be noted that the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) has been advised of the first TSAG Liaison Statement sent to the CWG meeting in October and at its last meeting on 13 November encouraged RAG and TDAG to take a position on the proposal. Moreover, upon endorsing the LS from TSAG, it was noted that the contribution will be reflected in the ISCG report to Council 2025.

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