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| African Telecommunication Union Administrations |
| Proposed modification of Resolution 54 - Creation of, and assistance to, regional groups |
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| **Abstract:** | This contribution proposes alternative African Member States Common proposals to that in Document 42 (Add.26) on Resolution 54, in response to Document 48 (Add.14) to this Assembly. |

# 1 Introduction

African Member States have noticed with great concern the contribution of the United States of America to this Assembly (Document 48 (Add.14)) regarding modifications to Resolution 54 “Creation of, and assistance to, regional groups”. African Member States are of the view that most of these modifications will not serve the purpose they are intended for, and further, may limit severely the activities of the Regional Groups of ITU-T Study Groups.

# 2 Discussion

In the USA Document 48 (Add.14), the main issues envisaged are:

1 It was highly stressed that all members from outside the regions “shall” be invited to participate in the regional group meetings, the reasons are:

a) with the view to assist developing countries to participate in the ITU-T;

b) to maximize the ability of those members to assist DCs to develop international standards on an open and transparent basis.

**Comments:** Regional Groups are created with the objectives of making it easier for membership from the region to attend these meetings instead of travelling to Geneva, which is a very costly city, and is far from most of the African and other developing counties, which makes the travel expenses with possible connection(s) very high and sometimes prohibitive.

Secondly, regional group meetings allow members of specific regions to express themselves and comment on specific issues to the region or problems encountered in their regional environment, and may not be of interest or applicable to other regions, e.g. level of maturity of its infrastructures, economic development level, topographic nature and its reflection on the most suitable or prevailing technology solutions, etc. Therefore, the issues discussed will be mainly of concern to these regions, which will not be of interest to other regions unless there is a commercial, marketing or political incentive for participants from other regions that push them to attend, bearing high travel costs and spending of precious time.

It has been observed that in such cases, the meetings become a venue to debate problems that are outside the scope of interest to the region, and have nothing to do with those countries and their operators in the region; additionally and mostly, the debates become monopolized by those participants to prevent evolution of some issues that may be of importance to this particular region.

It is also noted that most operating agencies in the developing regions are subsidiaries of multinational operating agencies located mainly in other regions; and the regional meeting will be the venue to bring the voices of those subsidiaries, which may not always be the problem of the parent multinational operating agency. Participation of those multinationals with strong negotiation power, will not assist subsidiaries to express their concerns.

On the other hand, the regional group meetings are usually short in time (from half a day to a day and half mostly) and attended by a suitable number of attendees from the region, not much in numbers. While increasing the number of participants from outside the region will put a high burden on the hosting country, usually a developing country with limited resources, including possible need for extra interpretation, bigger venue, etc., to the extent that it will be difficult to find a hosting country, which is already not an easy task. Adding to that, increasing the debates will necessitate either lengthening the duration of the meeting, which adds more burden to the hosting country, or there would be little time to discuss issues of concern to the region, in particular if discussions are dominated by participants from other regions.

In conclusion, participation of membership from all other regions will not assist regional groups, but on the contrary will place a higher burden on the hosting country, distract and/or dominate the discussions at the expense of the main concern of the region, and will decrease the frequency of the meetings, i.e. decreasing the participation of developing countries in ITU-T activities who may lose interest if the debate is not fully relevant to the region, or if they feel uncomfortable or unable to express their concerns in the meeting.

Transparency and openness of the discussions is guaranteed, because finally the outcome of any regional group meeting will be reported to the parent study group, and the call for contributions in the regional groups will lead to direct contributions to the parent study group.

On the other hand, standards with a regional flavour are very common, this is happening in the USA, Japan, Europe, etc., to suit the general environment and level of advancement of the infrastructure and the perception and uptake of citizens to the suitable technology, etc.

2 Regional Groups work to be within the mandate of the parent study group and the ITU‑T.

**Comments:** There is no need to add this sentence to the resolutions, and in several places. The mandates of the study group is in Resolution 2, and finally the report of the regional groups is raised to the parent study group, and it is the study group that will discuss the report and the resulting contributions and decide if it is within its mandates or not. This sentence will be an excuse for some participants from other regions in a regional group meeting to interfere to prevent the discussions in a topic they estimate that it is out of scope of the mandate of the parent study group, but it is the whole study group that has to decide that. So there is no need to insert repeatedly this sentence.

3 And within the resources allocated in the financial plan of the Union.

**Comments:** Of course any spending is governed by the availability of resources. Due to the importance of involvement of developing countries in the activities of ITU-T, there must be instead, efforts to raise the resources of ITU-T to provide support for the regional groups, e.g. if there are enough funds for the membership who intend to participate in other regional groups meetings, which is usually high, then it would be better to direct these funds to “assist” membership from developing countries in the region to participate in such regional meetings, or provide voluntary contributions to ITU-T to assist in supporting the activities of the regional group meetings.

Hence including this sentence repeatedly in the resolution implies that ITU-T should not exert any effort to find resources or raise resources, to support regional groups. The proposal is not to add this sentence at all.

4 And avoid duplication with other sectors:

**Comments:** There are other resolutions that handle the intersectional coordination. There is not an agreed definition of the word “duplication”, is it resemblance in the name of an item? Isn’t there many other aspects other than name? What is the difference between overlap and duplication? etc. WTSA has been always very sensitive to use the word “duplication”. Since it may be used to stop any work, with the assumption that it is duplicated with another work item, while it is not.

E.g. ITU-D does not develop standards, but can tackle issues having the same name of a work item in ITU-D. Also building in-hand capacity to develop standards is better done where the standards developing experts are there.

Accordingly, the sentence saying avoid duplication with other sectors is not appropriate to be placed in this resolution, nor the use of the word “duplicate”.

5 To note WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade: transparency, openness, impartiality and consensus, relevance and effectiveness, and coherence and developing country interests.

**Comments:** ITU-T Study Groups guidance are the CS, CV, ITRs, WTSA resolutions, etc., but not the WTO and its organs. Which is more-or-less a bilateral and/or a multilateral agreement. Noting also that some Member States are not members of the WTO. ITU-T basic texts and resolutions address these issues in several places. As indicated above, regional groups report to the parent study group, where it is the right venue to discuss these issues.

Adding text related to WTO and the reference to the “barriers to trade”, implies that the real purpose of participation in the regional groups meetings is to assure openness of the markets of the developing countries, which are mostly not producers or manufactures, for products and services of the other “developed” regions, and to assure that any standardization activities if even to the benefit to the region is not adopted as long as it may threaten the “sales” to these markets.

Hence it is concluded that pointing to WTO and its organs is not very relevant, and provides a very negative message to the developing countries and their regions, that their markets MUST be open for products of the developed regions irrespective of their concerns.

The proposal is to remove any reference to WTO and its organs and agreements.

# 3 Proposal

Notwithstanding the African Common Proposal (Document 42 (Add.26)) containing revisions to Resolution 54, the African Member States optionally may propose the following proposal for modifications to Resolution 54 shown in the annex, in response to the USA Proposal (Document 48 (Add.14)).

MOD AFCP/42A26/1

RESOLUTION 54 (REV. HAMMAMET, 2016)

Creation of, and assistance to, regional groups

(Florianópolis, 2004; Johannesburg, 2008; Dubai, 2012; Hammamet, 2016)

The World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (Hammamet, 2016),

considering

*a)* that Article 14 of the Convention authorizes the creation of study groups with a view to standardizing telecommunications on a worldwide basis;

*b)* that Article 17 of the Constitution states that "[t]he functions of the Telecommunication Standardization Sector shall be, bearing in mind the particular concerns of the developing countries; to fulfil the purposes of the Union relating to telecommunication standardization ...";

*c)* that Resolution 123 (Rev. Busan, 2014) of the Plenipotentiary Conference instructs the Secretary-General and the Directors of the three Bureaux to work closely with each other in pursuing initiatives that assist in bridging the standardization gap between developing[[1]](#footnote-1)1 and developed countries;

*d)* that the work of certain study groups, particularly in relation to, among other things, tariff and accounting principles, next-generation networks (NGN) and future networks (FN), security, quality, mobility and multimedia, continue to be of considerable strategic significance for developing countries,

recognizing

*a)* that Article 43 of the ITU Constitution (CS194) states that "Member States reserve the right to convene regional conferences, to make regional arrangements and to form regional organizations, for the purpose of settling telecommunication questions which are susceptible of being treated on a regional basis ...";

*b)* the growing level of participation and involvement of developing countries in the meetings of Study Groups of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T), in particular Study Groups 2, 3, 5 and 12;

*c)* that regional groups have been established within Study Groups 2, 3, 5, 11, 12, 13 and 17;

*d)* the satisfactory results obtained by the regional approach within the framework of the activities of the parent Study Group;

*e)* that the activities of most of these regional groups have become increasingly important;

*f)* the successful establishment of regional groups under Study Group 3, which leads studies relating to tariff and accounting matters (including costing methodologies) for international telecommunication services and study of related telecommunication economic, accounting and policy issues;

*g)* the sustainability of the regional groups of Study Group 3, and the encouraging start of regional groups established in accordance with this resolution,

noting

*a)* the need to increase the participation of developing countries in the work of study groups, with a view to ensuring that their specific needs and concerns are better taken into account;

*b)* the need to improve and strengthen the organization and working methods of the ITU-T study groups in the interests of enhancing the participation of developing countries;

*c)* the importance of having appropriate consultative frameworks for the formulation and study of Questions, the preparation of contributions and capacity building;

*d)* the need for developing countries to be more present and more active within ITU‑T's standardization forums;

*e)* the need to encourage more inclusive participation in the work of ITU‑T, e.g. by academia and experts working in the field of standardization of telecommunication/ information and communication technologies, particularly from developing countries;

*f)* the budgetary limitations, especially in developing-country institutions, for attendance at ITU‑T events of specific interest to them,

bearing in mind

that the application of the organizational set-up and working methods of the regional group of Study Group 3 to its successors could serve to expand and improve the level of developing country participation in standardization activities and contribute to achieving the objectives of Resolution 123 (Rev. Busan, 2014),

taking into consideration

*a)* the experiences and lessons learned by the regional groups of Study Group 3, and its successors, regarding the operational as well as organizational set-up and working methods;

*b)* the specific process for approving Recommendations foreseen for the regional groups of Study Group 3 in clause 9.2.1 of Resolution 1 (Rev. Dubai, 2012) of this assembly,

recognizing further

*a)* that a common and coordinated approach in regard to standardization could serve to foster the promotion of standardization activities in developing countries;

*b)* that joint meetings of regional groups of different ITU-T study groups, in particular if concatenated with a regional workshop and/or a meeting of a regional standardization body, could encourage the participation of developing countries in these meetings and increase the effectiveness of such joint meetings;

*c)* that in developing countries, a few standardization experts are usually responsible for handling numerous standardization areas within their administrations,

resolves

1 to support, on a case-by-case basis, the coordinated creation of regional groups of ITU‑T study groups, and to encourage cooperation and collaboration of these groups with regional standardization entities;

2 to invite the Council to consider providing support for the regional groups as appropriate;

3 that Member States and ITU-T Sector Members may be invited to participate in the regional groups of ITU-T study group meetings,

invites the regions and their Member States

1 to pursue the creation of regional groups of parent ITU-T study groups in their respective regions in accordance with *resolves* 1 of this resolution, and to support their meetings and activities, as appropriate, in coordination with TSB;

2 to develop draft terms of reference and working methods for these regional groups, which are to be approved by the parent study group;

3 to create regional standardization bodies, as appropriate, and encourage joint and coordinated meetings of such bodies with the regional groups of ITU-T study groups in their respective regions, so that these standardization bodies act as an umbrella for such regional group meetings,

invites the regional groups thus created

1 to disseminate information about telecommunication standardization and encourage the involvement of developing countries in standardization activities in their regions, and to submit written contributions, to the parent study group reflecting the priorities of their respective regions;

2 to cooperate closely with the relevant respective regional organizations,

instructs study groups and the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group

to coordinate joint meetings of the regional groups of ITU-T study groups,

instructs the Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau, in collaboration with the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau, within the allocated or contributed resources that are available

1 to provide all necessary support for creating and ensuring the smooth functioning of the regional groups;

2 to consider holding, whenever possible, workshops concurrently with meetings of the ITU-T regional groups;

3 to take all necessary measures to facilitate the organization of meetings and workshops of the regional groups,

calls upon the Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau

to cooperate with the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau in order to:

i) continue to provide specific assistance to regional groups;

ii) encourage the continuing development of computerized application tools related to their cost methodology by the members of the regional groups of Study Group 3;

iii) take appropriate steps to facilitate meetings of the regional groups to promote the necessary synergies among the three Sectors,

further invites the regional groups thus created

to cooperate closely with the relevant respective regional organizations, and to report on their work in their regions.

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1. 1 These include the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)