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| **Source:** | Rapporteur, TSAG Rapporteur group on working methods |
| **Title:** | (For agreement) Proposed revision to Supplement 5 to the ITU-T A-series on "Guidelines for collaboration and exchange of information with other organizations" |
| **Contact:** | Olivier DubuissonOrangeFrance | E-mail: olivier.dubuisson@orange.com |

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| **Abstract:** | In support to the proposed deletion of Recommendations ITU-T A.5 and A.6, the rapporteur group meeting on 5 Dec 2023 agreed that these small changes to Supplement 5 would help to clarify the communication process that may be established between an ITU-T study group and another organization. |

**Action**: TSAG is invited to agree this revision to Supplement 5 to the ITU-T A-series "Guidelines for collaboration and exchange of information with other organizations".

At the Rapporteur group meeting on 12 Sep 2023, it was agreed that:

Recs ITU-T A.4 and A.6 could be withdrawn if the communication process (of Recs ITU-T A.4 and A.6) is described as a Supplement to ITU-T A.5 (relying on ITU-T A.5 for the qualification of the organization). The editor agreed to develop a first draft of this Supplement for the 5 Dec 2023 RGM.

This table shows that all topics covered in Recs ITU-T A.4 and A.6 are covered by a more recent Recommendation (or Supplement):

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Topic** | **Covered (2012) in** | **Now covered in** |
| Qualification | A.4 (Annex A)A.6 (Annex A) | A.5 (Annex B) (2022) |
| Formal communication process (for information and document exchange) | A.4 (clause 2, 2nd para)A.6 (clause 2, 2nd para) | A Supp.5 (clause I.2)(2016) |
| Incorporation of texts by ITU-T (including copyright arrangements) | A.4 (clause 2.4 on copyright arrangements)A.6 (clause 2.2.2) | A.25 (2022) |
| Incorporation of texts by the other organization (including copyright arrangements) | A.4 (clause 2.4 on copyright arrangements)A.6 (clause 2.2.1) | A.25 (2022) |

Consequently, a new Supplement (to ITU-T A.5) is not needed. The current edition of [Supplement 5 (2016) to the ITU-T A-series Recommendations](https://www.itu.int/itu-t/recommendations/rec.aspx?rec=13023) "*Guidelines for collaboration and exchange of information with other organizations*" could suffice. It is interesting to note that the paragraphs covering the formal communication process in Recs ITU-T A.4 and A.6 already appear in Supplement 5, usually using the same words.

Supplement 5 does not make a difference between forums and consortia on one side, and national and regional SDOs on the other side, so it is consistent with RG-WM's agreement that there is no need to keep a difference between Rec. ITU‑T A.4 dedicated to "forums and consortia", and Rec. ITU-T A.6 dedicated to "national or regional SDOs".

The rapporteur group meeting on 5 Dec 2013 supported the changes suggested in this document to better describe "authoritative document exchange" in clause 7.3 and in Appendix I.

NOTE – The text inserted at the top of Appendix I was added by WTSA-12 to clause 2 of Recommendations ITU-T A.4 and ITU-T A.6.

The note on clause 6.1.1 is deleted to be consistent with the agreement that A.4-qualified organizations would have to be A.5-qualified if there is a need to make a normative reference to, or to incorporate text from, one of their texts. As a reminder, all A.6-qualified organizations are already also A.5-qualified.

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| Draft revised Supplement 5 to ITU-T A-series RecommendationsGuidelines for collaboration and exchange of information with other organizations |

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| SummarySupplement 5 to the ITU-T A-series Recommendations addresses different processes for collaboration and exchange of information with other qualified organizations, including a generic process for developing an ITU-T document (Recommendation, Supplement, etc.) in collaboration with other organizations, with the aim of producing documents that are identical (or technically-aligned). |

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| KeywordsCollaboration, collaborative work, common document, common team, multilateral collaboration, formal communication process. |

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Draft revised Supplement 5 to ITU-T A-series Recommendations

Guidelines for collaboration and exchange of information
with other organizations

# 1 Scope

ITU-T maintains cooperative relationships with many other organizations. The technologies for which these organizations are responsible continue to converge, which has resulted in an increase of interdependency between ITU-T's work programme and the programmes of other organizations. This Supplement describes a process for authoritative document exchange with another organization, which is to be agreed upon with that organization. It also introduces generic procedures for developing an ITU-T document (Recommendation, Supplement, etc.) in collaboration with one (or more) other organization(s). Such generic procedures are to be considered as guidelines for negotiating a process or mode of collaboration with other qualified organization(s).

On a case-by-case basis, ITU-T study groups may use other processes or modes of collaboration to those described in this Supplement. In particular, exchange of information (by way of liaison statements) can occur at any time with another organization without applying the processes described in this Supplement.

NOTE 1 – This Supplement does not apply to ITU-T Recommendations developed in collaboration with ISO/IEC JTC 1 because the long-standing procedures of [ITU-T A.23], which have proved very successful, remain unchanged.

NOTE 2 – Regarding collaboration with the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), clause 2.5.3 of [ITU‑T A.Supp3] states that "common or joint text is discouraged because of the current differences in procedures for document approval and revision."

The case of normatively referencing the documents of other organizations in ITU‑T Recommendations is addressed in [ITU‑T A.5].

The case of ITU-T incorporating texts (in part or in whole, with or without modifications) from another organization is addressed in [ITU-T A.25].

# 2 References

[ITU-T A.1] Recommendation ITU-T A.1 (2019), *Working methods for study groups of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T)*.

[ITU-T A.5] Recommendation ITU-T A.5 (2022), *Generic procedures for including references to documents of other organizations in ITU‑T Recommendations*.

[ITU-T A.7] Recommendation ITU-T A.7 (2016), *Focus groups: Establishment and working procedures*.

[ITU-T A.8] Recommendation ITU-T A.8 (2024), *Alternative approval process for new and revised ITU-T Recommendations*.

[ITU-T A.23] Recommendation ITU-T A.23 (2000), *Collaboration with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on information technology*.

[ITU-T A.25] Recommendation ITU-T A.25 (2022), *Generic procedures for incorporating texts between ITU-T and other organizations*.

[ITU-T A.Supp3] ITU-T A-series Recommendations – Supplement 3 (2012), *IETF and ITU‑T collaboration guidelines*.

[Author's Guide] *Author's Guide for drafting ITU-T Recommendations*.
<<http://www.itu.int/ITU-T/go/authors-guide/>>

[Patent policy] *Common patent policy for ITU-T/ITU-R/ISO/IEC*.
<<http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/ipr>>

[WTSA Res. 1] World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly Resolution 1 (Rev. Geneva, 2022), *Rules of procedure of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector*.
<<http://www.itu.int/pub/T-RES-T.1-2012>>

[WTSA Res. 18] World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly Resolution 18 (Rev. Geneva, 2022), *Principles and procedures for the allocation of work to, and coordination between, the ITU Radiocommunication and ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sectors*.
<<http://www.itu.int/pub/T-RES-T.18-2012>>

# 3 Definitions

## 3.1 Terms defined elsewhere

This Supplement uses the following terms defined elsewhere:

**3.1.1 amendment** [ITU-T A.1]: An amendment to a Recommendation contains changes or additions to an already published ITU-T Recommendation.

NOTE – An amendment is published by ITU-T as a separate document that contains primarily changes or additions. If it forms an integral part of the Recommendation, approval of an amendment follows the same approval procedures as for Recommendations; otherwise, it is agreed by the study group.

**3.1.2 Question** [WTSA Res. 1]: Description of an area of work to be studied, normally leading to the production of one or more new or revised Recommendations.

**3.1.3 supplement** [ITU-T A.1]: A document which contains material which is supplementary to and associated with the subject matter of one or more Recommendations but which is not essential to their completeness or understanding and implementation.

NOTE – Recommendation ITU-T A.13 deals with the subject of supplements to ITU-T Recommendations.

## 3.2 Terms defined in this Supplement

This Supplement defines the following terms:

**3.2.1 collaborative work**: A mode of collaboration between an ITU-T Question and a group in an organization (or groups in multiple organizations) aimed at producing one or more common (or technically-aligned) documents through close liaison, and in the case of common documents, through a synchronized approval (see Appendix II).

**3.2.2** **common document**: A document which is developed jointly by an ITU-T Question and a group in an organization (or groups in multiple organizations).

NOTE – A unique document is developed jointly by an ITU-T Question and one (or more) organizations but it may be published with different cover pages, headers and footers, based on the publication rules of each organization (see clause 9).

**3.2.3 common team**: A working group composed of individuals working on an ITU-T Question and from a group in an organization (or groups in multiple organizations) aimed at producing one or more common (or technically-aligned) documents through common meetings, and in the case of common documents, through a synchronized approval (see Appendix III).

**3.2.4** **technically-aligned documents**: A pair (or set) of documents which are developed in close collaboration between an ITU‑T Question and a group in an organization (or groups in multiple organizations), and whose texts are technically aligned (but not identical).

NOTE 1 – Implementation of one technically-aligned document may not hamper interoperability with the implementation of the other technically-aligned document(s).

NOTE 2 – The document developed by the ITU-T Question follows the ITU-T publication rules (such as [Author's Guide]). The other document may follow the publication rules of the (external) organization(s).

# 4 Abbreviations and acronyms

This Supplement uses the following abbreviations and acronyms:

AAP Alternative Approval Process

TAP Traditional Approval Process

TSB Telecommunication Standardization Bureau

# 5 Conventions

In expressions such as "each organization", "one organization", "the other organization", the term "organization" (singular) designates an ITU-T study group or an (external) organization. In case of bilateral collaboration, the expression "the organization" always designates the (external) organization with which an ITU‑T study group has established a mode of collaboration. In case of multilateral collaboration, the expression "the organization" designates the (external) organizations with which one (or more) ITU‑T study group(s) has established a mode of collaboration.

In case of bilateral collaboration, the term "organizations" (plural) designates an ITU-T study group and an (external) organization which have a common interest in an area of work. In case of multilateral collaboration, the term "organizations" designates one (or more) ITU-T study groups and (external) organizations which have a common interest in an area of work.

The terms "ballot" and "balloting" are to be understood with respect to the rules and approval process of the organization (ITU-T or the external organization). For ITU-T, this is the last call in the case of the alternative approval process (AAP) and it is the consultation of Member States in the case of the traditional approval process (TAP).

# 6 Qualification of an organization

**6.1** It is recommended that the ITU-T study group (or working party) considers the organization according to the criteria set out in clauses 6.1.1 to 6.1.3 (except for ISO and IEC).

**6.1.1** Qualification of the organization according to the criteria of Annex B to [ITU‑T A.5] is to be conducted before considering establishing one of the modes of collaboration listed in clause 7.2.

**6.1.2** In addition, the organization is expected to have a process by which its output documents are published and regularly maintained (i.e., reaffirmed, revised, withdrawn, etc.).

**6.1.3** The organization is also expected to have a document change control process, including a clear, unambiguous document numbering scheme. In particular, a feature to look for is that updated versions of a given document be distinguishable from the earlier versions.

**6.2** Qualification of the organization according to the criteria of Annex B of [ITU-T A.5] is reviewed on a regular basis by study groups that need to establish a mode of collaboration with that organization. In particular, if the patent policy of that organization has changed, it is important to check that the new patent policy is consistent with the common patent policy for ITU‑T/ITU‑R/ISO/IEC and the guidelines for the implementation of the common patent policy for ITU-T/ITU-R/ISO/IEC (see clause 11).

# 7 Determining the mode of collaboration

**7.1** To maximize the effectiveness of resources and to minimize conflict between standards, the ITU‑T study group and the relevant group in the organization are encouraged to identify areas for collaborative work as early as possible in the development process. Normally as part of the development of a new Recommendation in ITU-T (see Annex A of [ITU‑T A.1]), consideration is given to the need for interactions with other organizations. If enough information is available at this stage, then, if appropriate, one of the following modes of collaboration can be proposed and agreement sought from the other organization (see clause 8).

 

Figure 1 – Possible modes of collaboration between ITU-T and
one or more organizations

**7.2** Collaboration (as specified in this Supplement) can be carried out in one of three ways: by means of a liaison, by means of collaborative work or by means of a common team. Figure 1 provides some criteria for choosing one mode of collaboration but those criteria are not exhaustive and it is recommended that the study group and the organization carefully evaluate the terms of reference of the collaboration (see clause 8.2).

NOTE – These three modes of collaboration can be generalized to a multilateral collaboration as explained in Appendix V.

**7.3** A formal communication process can be established to provide authoritative information of one organization's dependencies on the other's work (see Appendix I). In addition, where an ITU‑T study group and an organization have a common interest in an area of work and have agreed that the prime responsibility falls to one of the two organizations, the liaison approach (see Appendix I) is well suited. In this situation, the work is carried out in one organization and the other organization participates, as appropriate, using its liaison status. The result is published by one organization and is referenced, as needed, by the other organization (see [ITU-T A.5]).

**7.4** Collaboration by means of collaborative work is suited for situations where the work to be carried out is straight-forward and relatively non-controversial, and where there is sufficient common participation in the meetings of the two organizations to make the interchange highly effective. The work on resolving issues and developing one or more common documents is continually progressed in the successive meetings of the two groups. The normal approval processes of both ITU-T and the organization are synchronized until the eventual publication of common or technically-aligned texts (see clause 9). Appendix II details generic procedures when collaborative work is performed.

**7.5** Collaboration by means of a common team is well suited for situations where extended dialog is necessary to develop solutions and reach consensus. In this situation, all interested parties participate together in a common team to mutually progress the work, resolve issues, and develop one or more common (or technically-aligned) documents. The normal approval processes of both ITU-T and the organization are synchronized until the eventual publication of common or technically-aligned texts (see clause 9). Appendix III details generic procedures when a common team is established.

**7.6** It is possible for the mode of collaboration to change as the work progresses. For example, work could be initiated in one organization and, as a result of a liaison statement, it could become recognized as integrally important to the other organization. At this point, agreement could be reached to advance all future work in a mode of collaboration.

# 8 Agreeing the mode of collaboration

**8.1** Agreement for collaboration needs to be mutually recognized to be successful. Therefore, operation in one of the three modes of collaboration for a given area of work is an agreed decision of both organizations. This agreement (based on the terms of reference presented in clause 8.2) is to be confirmed at the ITU-T study group level and at the appropriate decision-making level of the organization.

**8.2** The mutually agreed terms of reference for a given mode of collaboration may include:

1) the relevant ITU-T Question and its parent study group;

2) the relevant group in the organization and, if applicable, its parent body;

3) the mode of collaboration (see clause 7);

4) the scope of the effort as it relates to each organization's work programme;

5) where possible, identification (type, title and reference) of the document(s) that is (are) to be developed collaboratively and their type (technically-aligned documents or common document).

 NOTE 1 – It is recommended to use the template in [ITU-T A.1], Annex A;

6) detailed explanations on how to synchronize the ITU-T approval process (AAP according to [ITU-T A.8] or TAP according to section 9 of [WTSA Res. 1] or agreement at the study group level) with the approval process in the organization so that comments coming from one organization during the approval process can be taken into account by the other organization (see Appendix IV);

7) any start-up provisions to accommodate work in progress in each organization.

 NOTE 2 – If the draft ITU-T Recommendation has been consented for AAP Last Call (or determined for TAP consultation), the window to establish a collaboration is considered to be closed;

8) any reporting or tracking provisions beyond those specified in clause II.6 or III.6;

9) explanations on how the document(s) would be cooperatively maintained by both organizations (see clause 10);

10) statement that the organization's patent policy is consistent with the common patent policy for ITU-T/ITU-R/ISO/IEC (see clause 11).

**8.3** A collaborative relationship for a given area of work continues as long as both organizations feel collaboration is beneficial. In the unusual event that either organization feels that collaboration for a given area of work may be terminated, it is recommended to discuss this situation immediately with the other organization. If satisfactory resolution cannot be obtained, then collaboration for the given area of work can be terminated at any time by either the ITU-T study group or the appropriate body in the organization. If termination occurs, both organizations can make use of the prior collaborative work.

# 9 Publication of documents

**9.1** In the case of a common document, the final editing is done by ITU's Telecommunication Standardization Bureau (TSB) according to [Author's Guide]. TSB then sends the final document as soon as possible to the organization for publication according to its own rules.

NOTE – A unique document is developed jointly by ITU-T and an organization but it may be published with different cover pages, headers and footers, based on the publication rules of each organization. Consequently, cover pages, header and footers do not contain any normative statement.

**9.2** In the case of technically-aligned documents, each organization publishes its own document according to its own publication rules. However, it is recommended that the organization waits for TSB to produce the final document for ITU-T in case some editorial changes would also apply to its own document.

**9.3** The document is published as a Recommendation in ITU-T and as a standard (or any other type of normative document) in the organization (or as a Supplement or any other type of informative document in ITU-T, and as an informative document in the organization).

**9.4** It is valuable that users perceive the collaboration between ITU-T and the organization. This may be enforced by the following means:

a) Include a footnote from the title of the ITU-T document that notes the collaborative nature of the work; in the case of technically-aligned document, the footnote gives the title of the document of the organization, and states the degree of technical alignment.

b) Include a footnote from the title of the document of the organization that notes the collaborative nature of the work; in the case of technically-aligned documents, the footnote gives the title of the ITU-T document, and states the degree of technical alignment.

c) If an ITU-T document makes a reference to another ITU-T document that is a common document (or has a technically-aligned document in an organization), then include a footnote from the reference as in item a); if there are technical differences between both documents, then include an appendix or annex that summarizes the differences.

d) If a document from the organization makes a reference to another document that is a common document (or has a technically-aligned document in ITU-T), then include a footnote from the reference as in item b); if there are technical differences between both documents, then include an appendix or annex that summarizes the differences.

**9.5** If any unusual circumstances arise to indicate that publication of a common document is no longer desired (e.g., because of substantial differences in content), this situation is immediately discussed with the other organization. If after the consultation either organization determines that common document publication is not appropriate, then each organization can publish separately using its own publication format.

# 10 Maintenance of documents

**10.1** The work is not necessarily completed at the stage of publication. While every effort has been taken to produce a quality document, experience has shown that defects may be found as the document is being applied to implementations. Therefore, there is need for an ongoing shared responsibility for maintaining the document.

**10.2** It is critical that rapid correction of possible errors, omissions, inconsistencies, or ambiguities be performed cooperatively. It is recommended that the procedures for this important effort are outlined in the terms of reference of the chosen mode of collaboration (see clause 8.2).

**10.3** Further work is often identified as a result of the development process and as a result of changing technology and new operational requirements. Accordingly, there is an important need for amendments that provide expansions, enhancements, and updates to the basic provisions of the published common (or technically-aligned) documents.

**10.4** The processing of amendments may follow the same procedures as the original development. These may be considered as extensions to the original work by the same collaborative work or common team, or may be considered as separate new work that requires the formation of a new collaborative work or a common team (see clause 8.2).

# 11 Patent policy and copyright arrangements

**11.1** For common (or technically-aligned) documents, organizations are to have a patent policy which is consistent with the common patent policy for ITU-T/ITU-R/ISO/IEC [Patent policy], and submit patent statements, as appropriate, to ITU‑T and to the organization.

NOTE – Information pertaining to the common patent policy is available at <http://itu.int/en/ITU-T/ipr>.

**11.2** The subject of modifications to texts and arrangements for royalty-free copyright licences, including the right to sub-license, for texts accepted by either ITU‑T or by the organization and their publishers and others, is a matter to be agreed upon between TSB and the particular organization. However, the originating organization retains the copyright for its texts.

Appendix I

Guidelines for collaboration using the liaison mode

Establishing a communication process provides a framework for ongoing communications to:

– prevent inadvertent duplication of effort, while allowing each organization to pursue its own mandate;

– provide authoritative information of one organization's dependencies on the other's work;

– exchange information on topics of mutual interest.

**I.1** In some situations of common interest, it may be appropriate to reach an agreement that would allocate the standardization of a particular area of work to one organization. The result is published by one organization and is referenced, as needed, by the other organization (see [ITU‑T A.5]). If such an agreement cannot be reached, it is recommended that each organization does not produce a document whose implementation hampers interoperability with the implementation of a document of the other organization.

NOTE – Liaison statements can be exchanged with any external organization as necessary to progress the work (see [ITU-T A.1], clause 1.5). Qualification of the organization under Annex B of [ITU-T A.5] is not required.

**I.2** In some situations, authoritative document exchange between an ITU‑T study group and an organization helps to strengthen the information flow between ITU‑T and this organization. Such a framework for ongoing communications is particularly needed to provide authoritative information of one organization's dependencies on the other's work.

**I.3** All interactions between an ITU-T study group and the relevant group in the organization are conducted using the liaison procedures. In particular, this applies to participation in each other's meetings and to the submission of input documents.

NOTE – For example, for an individual to represent the relevant group of the organization in an ITU-T study group meeting, a letter (or liaison statement) from that organization is recommended authorizing such representation. Likewise, for an individual to represent an ITU-T Question in the meeting of an organization, a liaison statement from the ITU-T study group to that organization is recommended authorizing such representation.

**I.4** The decision to send a liaison statement is made by the study group. When necessary, between scheduled meetings, the liaison statement may be prepared by an appropriate correspondence process and approved by the study group chairman in consultation with the study group management. The liaison statement is sent by TSB (on behalf of the study group) to the organization.

**I.5** Where possible, the exchange of documents is in electronic format. Questions of electronic links to enable document exchange are to be agreed upon by the secretariats of the organization concerned.

**I.6** Documents submitted to the ITU‑T study group by the organization conform to the following criteria:

a) contain no confidential information (i.e., no distribution restriction);

b) indicate the source within the organization (e.g., committee, subcommittee, etc.);

c) differentiate between normative references and non-normative references.

These documents are not issued as contributions but as a TD at a study group or working party meeting, or as a document at a rapporteur meeting. As soon as they arrive they are made available, with the agreement of the study group chairman, for advance consideration by the relevant group. Moreover, they are issued with a reference to the originating organization.

Appendix II

Guidelines for collaboration using collaborative work

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Appendix III

Guidelines for collaboration using a common team

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Appendix IV

Guidelines for synchronization of approval processes

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Appendix V

Guidelines for multilateral collaboration

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