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Summary

This document presents the guidelines developed by the ITU Accessibility Task Force to assist staff members in implementing the ITU Accessibility Policy for Persons with Disabilities. They describe both the areas and the processes to be taken into consideration when progressively removing accessibility barriers. These guidelines are meant to be periodically revised so as to constantly reflect revisions of the ITU Accessibility Policy, as well as latest best practices.

This report was transmitted to Council 2013 **for information**.

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1. **PURPOSE OF THESE GUIDELINES**

***Persons with disabilities*** include persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

These Guidelines have been developed to assist staff in implementing the ITU Accessibility Policy for Persons with Disabilities. They describe both the areas and the processes to be taken into consideration when progressively removing accessibility barriers. These guidelines will be periodically revised so as to constantly reflect revisions of the ITU Accessibility Policy, as well as latest best practices.

1. **SCOPE**

These Guidelines apply to all ITU staff and ITU membership responsible for preparing or approving actions related to the implementation of the Accessibility Policy.

1. **GUIDELINES DETAILS**
   1. **General Guidelines**

The general guidelines outlined below are overarching pre-requisites that are to be met for an effective implementation of the Accessibility Policy. Therefore, they shall be applied to every ITU area of work and considered by all ITU staff and members in order to successfully implement the ITU Accessibility Policy. By systematizing their application, the general guidelines will help to instill a cultural change in the way accessibility for persons with disabilities is dealt with, thus enabling ITU to progressively become a fully accessible workplace to persons with disabilities.

### Awareness raising for ITU Membership

* ITU Membership are the decision makers on the strategic planning and implementation of all ITU activities. Awareness raising for ITU Membership is indispensable for the success of the ITU Accessibility Policy. Not only will raising awareness activities inform ITU membership but they will also create a sense of urgency, without which change cannot occur.

### Empowering and engaging staff

* Staff will be the ones translating ITU Accessibility Policy into concrete actions to improve access for persons with disabilities to ITU activities. Before mobilizing staff’ energy and talent for the implementation phase, basic training in disability awareness is needed. These activities are to target staff, including senior management and elected officials.
* Staff need to be aware of the existing barriers and solutions in their field of activities so as to be able to collectively develop/select effective solutions to remove existing barriers. To this end, training sessions on employment of persons with disabilities, accessible procurement, accessible security and safety services, accessible meetings and accessible ICTs shall be planned. This second and more in-depth layer of training will allow those who are the most affected by the change effort to feel empowered and engaged in making ITU a more accessible workplace*.*

### Knowing where we stand

* Gathering disability-related data (see Section 3.1) is essential to know about existing and potential accessibility barriers and to select priority areas for improving the accessibility of ITU. Every division of the three Sectors and the General Secretariat shall consider setting processes and formalizing procedures to collect information on persons with disabilities participating to its activities. It is suggested to nominate focal points in order to avoid duplication and incompatibility.

### Mainstreaming universal design

* All ITU organizational processes, particularly those which directly impact persons with disabilities participating in ITU activities, shall be reviewed in order to mainstream the universal design principle. As a note, the most cost-effective way to deliver a service, that is accessible to all, is to do it in a single way that caters flexibly for everyone’s needs. Indeed, individual adaptations tend to be more costly.

***Universal design*** means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. "Universal design" shall not exclude assistive devices where these are needed. (Article 2 of the CRPD).

### ITU Accessibility Plan: creating a virtuous circle

* To ensure that improvements in ITU’s accessibility will be sustained over time, it is extremely important to use a tool formalizing a continuous improvement process. This tool, the ITU Accessibility Plan will include the identification of the current level of accessibility, the listing of key areas of priority and related action plans, the timeline and the estimated budget. The plan should be produced through the following stages:

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| *Stage 1. Identification of the current level of Accessibility* | Getting a clear picture of existing barriers to be removed and of the special needs of persons with disabilities regularly participating in a specific activity is critical to effectively improve ITU’s level of accessibility in a cost-efficient manner. |
| *Stage 2. Listing of key areas of priority* | Based on the special needs of persons with disabilities participating in ITU activities, on the assessment of how severe are accessibility barriers and on the cost of removal, key priorities will be listed. |
| *Stage 3. Accessibility action plan* | An Accessibility action plan will be defined to remove the barriers identified in stage 2. Each action plan shall indicate the list of actions to be executed, the estimated date of each action’s completion, the staff involved in the execution of the plan of actions and a focal point for each Accessibility plan in order to facilitate intra and inter-sectoral communication. A pre-requisite to defining plan is to know what are the human and financial resources allocated for it. |
| *Stage 4. Estimated budget* | The budget will present the cost categories, estimated costs per category, the budget required to cover the costs (e.g. Division, Sector, Accessibility budget line, Accessibility Trust Fund, ICTC, other). An ITU Accessibility Plan could be produced before each budget review and planning period in order to allow internal decision-makers to make informed choices. This document would be a compilation of each division/department’s accessibility plans. |
| *Stage 5. Review* | After the execution of the first ITU Accessibility Plan, its results will be measured against expected outputs and outcomes. This will allow learning from past actions and adjusting future actions to refine a more effective and sustainable ITU Accessibility Policy implementation at each update. |

### Allocating a specific budget line to the Accessibility Policy

* To make the implementation of the Accessibility Policy a reality, ITU should allocate a specific yearly budget line to this Policy. This budget line would be used for the execution of the ITU Accessibility Plan. This budget shall be part of the regular budgeting process of the Union. Its amount shall be estimated taking into consideration previous accessibility-related expenses and recommendations made by the ITU Accessibility Task Force.
* The budget would be used for the following four distinct categories of expenses in order: i) captioning service for high level ITU events and events specifically address accessibility subjects, ii) cost of the provision of reasonable accommodation for individual participants to the above events planned, iii) investments in physical and information technology infrastructure, – this category includes expenses related to publication and document enhancement and translation and iv) capacity building and awareness raising activities.
* The ITU Accessibility budget line could be complemented with other sources of funding such as voluntary contributions from ITU Membership or divisions’ budget.
  1. **Employment of persons with disabilities**

To ensure equal opportunities and equal rights to qualified applicants for employment, and to better accommodate staff with disabilities, the following guidelines shall be considered.

### Applicants with disabilities

* [ITU](http://web.itu.int/osg/web-guidelines/) employment website shall comply with the accessibility requirements of [ITU Web Guidelines](http://web.itu.int/osg/web-guidelines/).
* It is important to publish vacancy notices and associated recruitment documents in accessible formats (see Section 3.7) to allow persons with visual, motor or other impairments to read and respond them.
* Displaying the Accessibility Policy on the online recruitment platform is recommended to let potential applicants know that ITU is committed to being an inclusive organization for persons with disabilities.
* Inviting applicants selected for an interview to disclose their specific needs allows taking into consideration existing barriers in the selection process and providing, to the greatest extent possible, reasonable accommodation. This information is to be kept confidential and handled exclusively by the Human Resources Management Department.

### Staff with disabilities

* Confidentially gathering disability-related data (see Section 3.1) on staff is vitally important in order to know about potential accessibility barriers and to select priority areas for improving the accessibility of the workplace.
* The fundamental right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others, implies differentiated treatment in the workplace. The Human Resources Management Department shall consider providing reasonable accommodation to any activity in which staff with disabilities might participate. Such activities include, but are not limited to, meetings, conferences, training sessions and career development activities.
* Staff who acquire a temporary or permanent disability shall be provided reasonable accommodation, where possible, so as to maintain their contribution to the organization, to the greatest extent possible.
* Working in collaboration with the Medical service and the Facilities Management division is essential to find cost-effective solutions to remove accessibility barriers.
  1. **Accessibility of procurement processes**

To progressively ensure that every ITU service, product or activity incorporates the Universal Design principle into the earliest development stage, it is essential to adjust procurement processes. The Procurement Division shall be considering the following guidelines.

* Incorporating accessibility requirements into the technical specifications developed for the procurement of ITU services is strongly recommended. This includes, but is not limited to, the procurement of equipment for ITU, the building or refurbishment of ITU facilities, the provision of information and communication technology services, and the procurement of content generation.
* An evaluation process shall be developed to ensure that delivered solutions which claim to support accessibility actually do so.
* Those making procurement requirements need to be able to specify to suppliers what accessibility means in the context of any particular procurement. An inclusive approach is to involve persons with expertise in disabilities throughout the contract management lifecycle (e.g. specification, product/supplier selection, design and implementation).
  1. **Accessibility of ITU premises**

Physical barriers hinder the participation of persons with disabilities to activities taking place within ITU premises. To address the removal of barriers, the Facilities Management division shall be considering the following guidelines.

### ITU Headquarters

* Continuing complying with the accessibility requirements of the [Swiss Norm 521 500 “*Building with no obstacle*”](http://www.webnorm.ch/06c8d325-da87-4dc1-af51-1e25166c9684/F/DownloadAnhang)  and considering other international standards for premises accessibility: the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=259) and [ISO 21542 “*Building construction - Accessibility and usability of the built environment*”](http://www.iso.org/iso/home/store/catalogue_tc/catalogue_detail.htm?csnumber=50498)
* The involvement of organizations of persons with expertise in disabilities in the development of accessible alternatives is to be continued.

### ITU Regional and area offices

* Accessibility requirements shall be included in host country agreements. Public administrations and organizations hosting ITU regional and area offices shall be invited to improve the accessibility of their premises, taking into account the standards and national legislation applicable to the aforementioned buildings.
  1. **Accessibility of security and safety services**

Letting persons with disability know about the accessibility of security and safety services is crucial for them to feel safe when participating in any activity taking place within ITU buildings. The Protocol, Safety and Security division shall consider the following guidelines.

* On the basis of data (see Section 3.1) on persons with disabilities physically present in ITU premises, practice exercises shall be organized to assess whether current safety and security procedures are well adjusted to the needs of persons with disabilities.
* Local emergency response organizations shall be involved in the development of special measures aiming at improving the accessibility of security and safety services.
  1. **Accessibility of ITU meetings and conferences**

Accessible meetings (i.e. meetings, workshops, symposiums, seminars, webinars, panels, sessions, trainings, World Café, and other meetings) and conferences give ITU the opportunity to tap into a new pool of talent. The participation of persons with disabilities increases the richness and the diversity of contributions. ‘Reasonable accommodation’ is ITU’s guiding principle given the not unlimited budget of the Union. Every division involved in the organization of meetings and conferences shall consider the following guidelines.

### High-level ITU conferences and meetings and ITU conferences and meetings address specifically accessibility related subjects

* When participants are required to register, accessibility needs can be anticipated by using the registration form to request disclosure of special needs. The provision of reasonable accommodation requires the event organizers to have a process in place for collecting and considering the requests and for informing the participant with special needs about what services will be made available.

***Reasonable accommodation*** means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments, not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms (Article 2 of the UNCRPD).

* When registration forms are not used, the event invitation letter shall include the email address to be contacted for a request for reasonable accommodation along with a deadline for sending such request.
* The most frequent requirements for organizers are:
* to provide alternative documentation and real-time communications for hearing or visually impaired participants;
* to ensure that the venue of the meeting is physically accessible to participants using wheelchairs or other motor aids;
* to ensure that service animal relief areas are provided;
* the option of participating in conferences and meetings remotely, via an “interactive remote participation” service such as Skype, NetMeeting, Microsoft Lync and Adobe Connect currently used by ITU.

The provision or not of such services should be assessed in time to inform participants with disabilities about the nature of the reasonable accommodation that will be provided.

* A person or a desk should be the designated point for all accommodation requests that may arise during the meeting. Also, an accessible electronic copy of the ITU buildings map shall be emailed to the meeting participants with visual impairment prior to their visit.
* When ITU is responsible to either provide or recommend accommodations, it is important to ensure that some hotel rooms are accessible (e.g. room and shower accessible to wheelchairs, bed heights).
* As far as stand-alone virtual meetings are concerned, the most accessible platforms available shall be sought (see Section 3.7). These include but are not limited to teleconferencing systems, VoIP applications such as peer-to-peer data and video exchanges, and webinar applications.

### ITU meetings and conferences hosted by external partners

* Including accessibility requirements in the hosting agreement allows external partners providing, upon request, reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities during the events.
  1. **Accessibility of information and communication technologies and corporate Communications tools**

ITU Staff, delegates and visitors, use every day a wide variety of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). These include, but are not limited to, Telecommunication Information Exchange Service (TIES), databases, working documents, reports in electronic format, and proceedings of ITU meetings, ITU recommendations, web applications and stand-alone applications developed for specific purposes. ICT accessibility is crucial for persons with disabilities participating in ITU activities. Every staff responsible for the development, the provision or the granting of access authorizations to ICTs shall consider the following guidelines.

### Development of ICTs

* Whenever the development or the procurement of a new ICT tool or service is being planned, the principle of universal design shall be applied and the technical specifications shall list accessibility requirements at the earliest stage possible.

### Digital documents, reports and publications

* Several formats and technologies exist for the provision of accessible digital documentation: electronic Braille, Text-To-Speech (TTS), Digital Accessible Information Systems (DAISY) audio book format, EPUB, XML files, Easy-to-Read and MP3 player. Before making decisions on the formats selected for making digital documents accessible, careful attention should be paid to i) the technical nature of the document, ii) the technical ability of assistive technologies, iii) readers with disabilities’ skills and iv) user interfaces.
* All digital documents, reports and publication shall be produced in accessible formats. Technical guidelines on [creating accessible Word documents](http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/creating-accessible-word-documents-HA101999993.aspx) are available on Microsoft website. Also, technical guidelines on [creating accessible PDF documents](http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20-TECHS/pdf.html) are available on the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) website.
* For documents collaboratively produced or edited by several staff, it is important that document editing and collaboration includes accessibility checks throughout the different processes.
* Accessibility requirements shall be included in the technical specifications related to the procurement of design agencies services. This is particularly important for the content to be made available on line.
* The accessibility of presentational content (e.g. Powerpoint presentations) shall also be considered to make it accessible to the widest audience possible. For this purpose, guidelines on [making presentations accessible to all](http://www.w3.org/WAI/training/accessible.php) have been produced by W3C. Microsoft PowerPoint’s in-built accessibility could be used to verify the accessibility of the presentation content.
* For technical guidelines on accessible publications, staff are invited to refer to the following website: [Accessible Publishing: Best Practice Guidelines for Publishers](http://www.editeur.org/files/Collaborations/Accessibility/WIPO.html#guidelines_for_editorial_and_design)
* As far as scanned content is concerned, it shall be noted that the quality of the document to be scanned has to be almost perfect, in order for Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software to work sufficiently well. Further editing is needed in most cases in order to make the document readable. A lack of quality of documentation might create a readability barrier for persons with visual or a cognitive impairment.

### Paper documents, reports and publications

* Paper documents to be handed out to staff, delegates or visitors might present accessibility barriers for visually impaired persons. When this situation occurs, a copy shall be printed in the preferred accessible format (Braille, Easy-to-Read). Alternatively, an accessible digital version shall be provided in advance so as to allow an optimal use of the document. Reader preferences and the cost to be borne for such service usually impact the choice of solution.

### Web accessibility

* ITU has adopted the level AA of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) for making ITU web content accessible, [ITU Web guidelines](http://web.itu.int/osg/web-guidelines/) recommend web editors and content providers to use [UN accessibility guidelines](http://www.un.org/webaccessibility/accessibility_guidelines_consolidated_final.pdf) as a reference. These guidelines deal with page design (visual elements and coding), textual content, navigation, script and forms as well as with validation procedures for designers, developers and content providers.
* SharePoint is currently used for sharing Intranet and Internet content. Technical guidelines on [creating accessible Sharepoint content](http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/windows-sharepoint-services-help/accessibility-features-HA010173723.aspx#BM6) are available on Microsoft website.
* ITU websites’ accessibility should be regularly tested so as to ensure that online readers with disabilities access their content. In addition, the use of assistive technologies for testing websites is very important because it will help identify issues that cannot be found just by looking at the page code.

### Social media

* Social media refer to the use of telecommunications to interact with others online through the sharing of words, pictures, video and audio. It has been shown that the benefits of social media are greater for persons with disabilities as social media remove physical barriers of traditional social interactions. Therefore, a particular attention shall be paid in making ITU content that is shared on social media platforms as accessible as possible.
* Accessibility issues experienced on sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube include, but are not limited to, i) lack of section headings, ii) poor color contrast, iii) inability to navigate using a keyboard only, iv) inability to operate a functionality using the keyboard only, v) lack of text equivalent for images, vi) inability to resize text, vii) video lacking captioning. It is recommended to include accessibility guidelines or reference to the [ITU Web guidelines](http://web.itu.int/osg/web-guidelines/) in ITU Social Media Policy.

### Audio conferencing equipment

* Adjustments shall be made in order to have the microphone and audio controls fully accessible to persons with a physical disability. It is to be noted that, due to the need to reach across the desk for repositioning the microphone or accessing the controls, these might not be accessible equipment.
* The controls for the audio conferencing equipment might not be sufficiently tactile. For instance, in might be very challenging for a person with a visual impairment to discern easily the location of the controls and determine the precise use of the controls. When needed, adjustments or assistance shall be planned for. As an example, Braille stickers to the individual control buttons could be developed in order to assist, under request, blind or visually impaired users. Also, a basic instruction sheet on operating the audio control could also be provided, under request, in Braille.

### Captioning

* Priorities of providing captioning service within the available accessibility budget should be given to high-level ITU conference and meetings (treaty making conference, Council, sector advisory groups) and events address specifically accessibility issues.
* When organizing the meeting, staff shall pay attention to the location of the captioning display screen. It is recommended to avoid locations which require users of the service to twist in an awkward physical contortion in order to be able to see the content. One alternative to this issue is to give the users the URL for accessing the text being captioned. This option removes the need for the user to twist in order to follow the content projected on screen. In addition, meeting participants can use their own screen adaptations to make the content more personally accessible.
* Captioning is usually turned off when closed meetings take place as captioning is mostly provided over the Internet. In this case, alternative solutions have to be considered and planned ahead to allow meeting participants with a hearing impairment to attend the closed sessions. In the Popov room, it is now possible to stream the content on the screen to user’s laptop/tablet (as of June 2013, limited to 20 users).
* It should be noted that displaying captions in multiple languages results in a significant reduction in the overall accessibility of the onscreen content unless captioning is selectable local to the user’s screen.

### Signing

* There are probably as many sign languages as there are spoken languages. It is important to acknowledge that the use of sign language interpretation can be an expensive option for the provision of reasonable accommodation. Consequently, it is important to consider all existing alternatives when sign language interpretation is requested.
* Allowing signing to be provided remotely through the use of a video conferencing service presents opportunities to reduce travel and accommodation costs. Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) or Video Interpreting Services (VIS) can provide appropriate and effective means of providing sign language interpretation. Software such as Skype, NetMeeting, Microsoft Lync and Adobe Connect, currently used by ITU, could serve as short-term cost effective solution to provide some support in this area. However, it must be noted that VIS and VRI have technical requirements regarding the quality of the internet connection.
  1. **Accessibility in ITU programmatic activities**

ITU programmatic activities include, but are not limited to, i) the development of recommendations, standards, statistics, indicators, reports and guidelines, ii) the organization of knowledge-sharing and capacity-building workshops, symposiums, tutorials, seminars, webinars, panels, meetings, sessions, trainings, World Café and conferences, iii) the design and implementation of development programmes and projects. Accessibility is to be mainstreamed in all ITU programmatic activities in order to advance on the implementation of the CRPD and of the Resolution 175 (Guadalajara, 2010). The three Sectors and the General Secretariat shall consider the following guidelines.

* National country analyses concerning persons with disabilities shall be strengthened in order to provide relevant inputs for the articulation of high quality development objectives that are inclusive of persons with disabilities.
* A special attention shall be paid in ensuring that the implementation of ITU activities will not directly or indirectly discriminate against persons with disabilities, in particular by creating new barriers.
* On the basis of the disability-inclusive strategic planning, the implementation of ITU programmatic activities shall be monitored and evaluated taking disability rights into account. This will contribute to strengthen ITU’s work in this domain.
* A guidance note on "[Including the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in United Nations Programming at Country Level](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/program/dwcp/download/disabilityguidancenote.pdf)" developed by United Nation Development could serve as a reference for technical guidelines.

1. **MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

The ITU Accessibility Task Force is the inter-sectoral coordination mechanism for the Accessibility Policy implementation. When necessary, the Accessibility Task Force liaises with other internal mechanisms to coordinate specific areas of work covered in the Accessibility Policy.

The Accessibility Task Force produced these guidelines to assist the three Sectors and the General Secretariat in the Accessibility Policy implementation. Every 12 months, these guidelines will be revised to reflect any revision of the Accessibility Policy, to include latest best practices and to provide further guidance on areas for which staff have expressed a lack of knowledge.

**Appendices**

**Appendix A - Definitions and Abbreviations**

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| **DAISY** | Digital Accessible Information Systems |
| **ICTs** | Information and Communication Technologies |
| **TIES** | Telecommunication Information Exchange Service |
| **TTS** | Text-To-Speech |
| **UNCRPD** | United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities |
| **VRI** | Video Remote Interpreting |
| **VIS** | Video Interpreting Services |
| **W3C** | World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) |
| **WCAG** | Web Content Accessibility Guidelines |

**Appendix B - Selected References**

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* UN (2006) “*Convention the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*”.
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