



Public consultation on the draft ITU Strategic plan for 2020-2023 Contribution from the Association for Progressive Communications

16 March 2018

The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the International Telecommunications Draft ITU Strategic plan for 2020-2023.

APC is an international network and non-profit organisation founded in 1990 that works to help ensure everyone has access to a free and open internet to improve lives and create a more just world. APC advocates for more affordable and universal access to the internet generally, as well as internet policy and regulation that enable the promotion and protection of human rights, women's rights and the rights of people of diverse sexualities, particularly when those rights are threatened or violated by states and private sector actors.

Below are APC's comments on 1) Proposed ITU strategic framework: i) Vision, ii) Mission, iii) Values, iv) Strategic Goals, v) Targets, and vi) Strategic Risk Management

Comments on vision, mission and values

APC identifies with and supports the ITU vision statement for 2023.

The mission statement is powerful and relevant, however, we have some concern that the inclusion of 'services and applications' and their use is outside of the ITU's core focus. Is this a new addition to the mission statement? If not, when was it introduced?

In the value on "Openness" we think that the broader public has expectations that the Union needs to be responsive to. We suggest it is added as follows. Addition is in bold in square brackets.

Openness: Being aware of and responsive to the needs of all its membership, as well as the activities and expectations of intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, civil society, technical community and academia **[as well as of the broader public]**.

APC proposes that an additional value be added: **"Inclusiveness"** to reflect the ITU's increasing efforts to open its membership to all stakeholders, including to civil society. An alternative would be to rename Openness to "Openness and inclusiveness".

We feel that the text on universality and neutrality is not entirely clear. We like the text on human rights but suggest it is included as a separate value, e.g.:

ORIGINAL TEXT

Universality and **neutrality**: As a United Nations specialized agency, ITU reaches, covers and represents all parts of the world. Within the remit of the Basic Instruments of the Union, its operations and activities reflect the express will of its membership. ITU also recognizes the overarching pre-eminence of human rights, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression, which includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers, and the right to not be subjected to arbitrary interference with privacy; **】**

APC'S PROPOSED CHANGES:

Universality and **neutrality**: As a United Nations specialized agency, ITU reaches, covers and represents all parts of the world. Within the remit of the Basic Instruments of the Union, its operations and activities reflect the express will of its membership.

Human rights: ITU also recognizes that human rights underpins the work of the Union, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression, which includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers, and the right to not be subjected to arbitrary interference with privacy.

APC would like to see reference to gender equality in the “People-centred” value as well as non-discrimination. We believe that the last sentence in this value “Being results-based, ITU aims for tangible results and to maximize the impact of its work” would work better as a stand-alone value.

ORIGINAL TEXT:

[People-centred, service-oriented and results-based: Being people-centred, ITU is focused on people in order to deliver results that matter to each and every individual. Being service-oriented, ITU is committed to further delivering high-quality services and maximizing satisfaction of beneficiaries and stakeholders. Being results-based, ITU aims for tangible results and to maximize the impact of its work. **】**

APC'S PROPOSED CHANGES:

People-centred and service oriented: Being people-centred, the ITU is focused on meeting the needs of all people, without discrimination.

Results-based: ITU aims for tangible results and to maximize the impact of its work.

We understand the text below - final paragraph of the values section - and support it but we were wondering if it is in the right place. If it stays here there it should link to the standards referred to.

“The Union expects all of its staff to faithfully adhere to the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service and the ITU Code of Ethics. ITU also expects that any partner will uphold the highest standards of ethical behavior.”

Comments on Strategic Goals

We propose inclusion of 'people-centred' in the last line of Goal 1: towards building an inclusive people-centred digital society. Proposed change indicated in bold in square brackets.

Goal 1 - Growth: Enable and foster access to and increased use of telecommunication/ICT in support of the digital economy and society

Recognizing the role of telecommunications/ICTs as a key enabler for social, economic and environmentally sustainable development, ITU will work to enable and foster access to, and increase the use of, telecommunications/ICTs. Growth in the use of telecommunications/ICTs has a positive impact on short- and long-term socio-economic development, as well as on the growth of the digital economy, towards building an inclusive **[people-centred]** digital society.

APC is concerned that the gender digital divide is not mentioned specifically in Goal 2, but even more so that women and girls are considered a marginal and vulnerable population. Women are 50% of the world's population and they are marginalised, not marginal. And most women are not vulnerable, they are excluded or discriminated against. The same is the case for youth or young people.

We propose the following changes to the text:

Goal 2 - Inclusiveness: Bridge the digital divide and provide broadband access 'leaving no one behind'¹

Being committed to ensuring that everyone without exception benefits from telecommunications/ICTs, ITU will work to bridge the digital divides [including the gender digital divide] for an inclusive digital society and enable the provision of broadband access for all, leaving no one behind. Bridging the digital divide focuses on global telecommunication/ICT inclusiveness, fostering telecommunication/ICT access, accessibility, affordability and use in all countries and regions and for all peoples, including **[women and girls, young persons]** and marginal and vulnerable populations, such as **[women and girls, youth,]** people with different income levels, indigenous peoples, older persons and persons with disabilities.

APC proposes the following changes to Goal 3 because we feel that the last sentence bundles together several unconnected issues, some of which are not within the ITU's mandate, and we feel that the emphasis should be security of systems. We believe that the effects of the telecommunications sector on the environment is important, and an area in which the ITU has done excellent work. We believe that it should be addressed by a specific goal focused on combating harmful effects on the environment of e-waste. It could also include promotion of the use of renewable energy in the sector:

Goal 3 - Sustainability: Manage emerging risks, challenges and opportunities resulting from the rapid growth of telecommunication/ICT

To promote the beneficial use of telecommunications/ICTs, ITU recognizes the need to manage emerging risks, challenges and opportunities from the rapid growth of telecommunications/ICTs. The Union focuses on enhancing the quality, reliability, sustainability, resilience [and security] of networks and systems [~~as well as safety and security~~] in the use of telecommunications/ICTs. ~~Accordingly, the Union will work towards minimizing the negative impact of undesired collaterals, such as~~

~~cybersecurity threats, including potential harm to the most vulnerable parts of society, in particular children, and negative effects on the environment, including e-waste.~~

[Goal 3.a Environmental sustainability: The Union will work towards minimizing the negative effects of the rapid growth of telecommunication/ICT on the environment, including e-waste.]

APC proposes a change to Goal 4 as we believe changes in the sector requires innovation not just at the level of technology. In particular we would like the text to accommodate the idea of locally owned network and managed network infrastructure (also referred to as community networks).

Goal 4 - Innovation: Enable innovation in telecommunication/ICT in support of the digital transformation of society

The Union recognizes the crucial role of telecommunications/ICT in the digital transformation of society. The Union seeks to contribute to the development of an environment that is conducive to innovation, where **[new business models and]** advances in new technologies become a key driver[s] for the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Comments on targets

APC has the following comments on the targets included in this document:

- Use of the concept 'individuals' need to be defined. Is it referring to the world population above the age of 10, for example?
- Similarly we think it would be helpful to define what kind of access is meant. E.g. would internet access include access via zero-rated services which we believe is not a meaningful or effective form of access.
- We feel that Target 1.3 is bit low.
- Target 1.8 I should rather refer to people **having the opportunity to interact** to emphasise that governments should do more than just put information online.
- The same applies to Target 1.9: 30% of the population should have the opportunity to use financial services.
- In Goal 2 we question the use of the term 'households' when individuals will have more access via their personal mobiles. Households was a relevant concept when fixed line was the predominant access form.
- In Target 2.3: by 2023 it would be helpful what is meant by 'using the internet'.
- We think Target 2.6 is vague. Broadband services are a shifting target. If it is defined that should be referenced here.
- Target 2.7: by 2023, 96% of world population covered by broadband services seems redundant as by then the whole world will be covered by satellite broadband anyway. Perhaps emphasise affordability?
- We are very pleased to see the inclusion of Target 2.8 on gender equality. Note there is a missing letter in the last word.
- In Goal 4 Target 4.1 we propose adding reference to innovation in business models as well as in technology.
- In Goal 5 Target 5.1 we think it would add value to make it clear that the funding/development programmes, projects and initiatives include both governmental and nongovernmental initiatives.
- We noticed that there are no target specifically focused on spectrum, although

this might be implied in some of the broadband targets. Nevertheless we propose inclusion of a target on equitable and reliable access to affordable spectrum (and international connectivity) under Goal 3 sustainability.

APC's comments on Strategic Risk Management

- We think that the “Risk of conflicting efforts, inconsistencies and competition with other relevant organizations and bodies that leads to misperception of ITU’s mandate, mission and role” can be avoided by mapping which other bodies are doing work on new areas thereby enabling the ITU to focus on its core competency to achieve its mission.
- The risk of “**Spreading too thin**” and “**Risk of mission dilution and losing sight of the organization core mandate**” can be avoided by prioritising use of available funding/resources towards activities that are part of the ITU’s core mandate including making material available in official UN languages.
- The risk of “**Failure to respond quickly to emerging needs and innovate sufficiently while still providing high quality deliverables**” can be avoided by partnering with other actors already working on emerging needs.
- **Risks related to “Concerns regarding trust and confidence”** and “Risk of rising concerns related to trust by membership and stakeholders” can be avoided by investing in increased transparency in decision-making and being consistently inclusive.
- The risk of “**Insufficient funding**” can be avoided by the Union sticking to its core mandate and thereby avoiding escalation in costs.