**Online Open Consultations on Internet and Accessibility**

**"Access to the Internet for Persons with Disabilities and specific needs"**

**ITU COUNCIL WORKING GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL INTERNET-RELATED PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES (CWG-INTERNET)**

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**Date: 26-01-2016**

### **Question 1: Challenges**

**What are the different challenges facing persons with disabilities and specific needs (e.g. lack of ICT skill sets etc.) in accessing and using the Internet?**

* There are number of factors that could be pointed as challenges in accessing internet by persons with disabilities in Sri Lanka. Most of the persons with disabilities do not possess adequate knowledge of using assistive/adaptive technologies. High cost of the alternative technologies such as screen readers and screen magnifiers, lack of resources that can used with their local languages, poverty are some of the Causes that has led to this situation. In addition to these, developers generally do not adhere to the guidelines and standards that has put forward to make web contents accessible to all, and the ultimate result is inaccessible websites.

### **Question 2: Best practices**

**What possible approaches and examples of good practices are available to address these challenges?**

* Through various local disability campaigns and international initiatives access to internet is being facilitated in various means. W3 standard has been introduced to developers to make websites accessible to all including persons disabilities. Today, most of the websites, Email services, social media such as face book, online libraries, internet banking and internet shopping can be utilized by persons with disabilities with alternative accessible technologies.

### **Question 3: Gaps**

**What are the gaps in addressing these challenges and how can these gaps be filled?**

Sri Lanka is yet to design an accessibility guideline for websites and web contents. In absence of the relevant accessibility provisions at law, prevailing challenges are difficult to overcome. In addition to that, an effective mechanism should be in place to implement/enforce those guideline, standards and policies.

### **Question 4: Role of Governments**

**What is the role of Governments in addressing these challenges and gaps?**

The Government should encourage the persons with disabilities to use internet in their day to day activities simply because it is easier for them rather than accessing the physical buildings/entities. Some of the things that a Government can do to encourage the persons with disabilities includes, provision of easy internet packages, implementing strict accessibility policy, special schemes to subsidies assistive devices, speedy ratification to the international treaties/conventions that in place to enhance the living condition of the disabled people.

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