

RESOLUTION 123 (REV. BUCHAREST, 2022)

Bridging the standardization gap between developing and developed countries

The Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Telecommunication Union (Bucharest, 2022),

recalling

- a)* No. 13 of Article 1 of the ITU Constitution, which establishes that the Union shall in particular facilitate the worldwide standardization of telecommunications, with a satisfactory quality of service;
- b)* that, in Article 17, the Constitution indicates that the functions of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) shall be, bearing in mind the particular concerns of the developing countries¹, to fulfil the purposes of the Union;
- c)* that the strategic plan for the Union for 2020-2023, approved by means of Resolution 71 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference and its annexes, includes under the objectives of ITU-T to promote the active participation of the membership, in particular developing countries, in the definition and adoption of non-discriminatory international standards (ITU-T recommendations) with a view to bridging the standardization gap;
- d)* that the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA) adopted Resolution 44 (Rev. Geneva, 2022);
- e)* Resolution 54 (Rev. Geneva, 2022) of WTSA, on regional groups of ITU-T study groups, whose purpose is to help bridge the standardization gap between developing and developed countries;

¹ These include the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

- f)* that the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) adopted Resolution 47 (Rev. Kigali, 2022), in which it resolves to continue engaging in activities to enhance knowledge and effective application of information and communication technology (ICT) standards, including ITU Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R) and ITU-T recommendations, in developing countries;
- g)* Resolution 37 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) of WTDC, which recognizes the need to create digital opportunities in developing countries;
- h)* Resolution 32 (Rev. Hammamet, 2016) of WTSa, on strengthening electronic working methods for the work of ITU-T;
- i)* that the Geneva Plan of Action and Tunis Agenda for the Information Society of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) emphasize efforts to overcome the digital divide and development divides,

considering

- a)* that the strategic plan for the Union for 2020-2023, adopted in Resolution 71 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) includes:
- i)* Outcome T.2-a: Increased participation in the ITU-T standardization process, including attendance of meetings, submission of contributions, taking leadership positions and hosting of meetings/workshops, especially from developing countries;
- ii)* Output T.2-1: Bridging the standardization gap;
- to promote the active participation of the membership, in particular developing countries (e.g. remote participation, fellowships, establishment of regional study groups),
- b)* that focus on the following activities is still needed:
- to develop interoperable, non-discriminatory international standards (ITU-T recommendations);

- to assist in bridging the standardization gap between developed and developing countries;
 - to extend and facilitate international cooperation among international and regional standardization bodies;
 - to provide assistance to developing countries in bridging the digital divide by achieving broader telecommunication/ICT-enabled socio-economic development,
- c)* the continued shortage of skilled human resources in the standardization field in developing countries, resulting in a low level of developing-country participation in ITU-T and ITU-R meetings, and, consequently, in the standards-making process, leading to difficulties when interpreting and applying ITU-T and ITU-R recommendations;
- d)* ongoing challenges relating to capacity building, in particular for developing countries, in the light of rapid technological innovation and increased convergence of services;
- e)* the difficulty faced by developing countries with stringent budgetary constraints in participating in the activities of ITU, especially regular meetings of study groups and advisory groups, for which the meeting duration could be up to two weeks;
- f)* the moderate level of participation by representatives of developing countries in ITU standardization activities, whether through lack of awareness of these activities, difficulties in accessing information, lack of training for human talent in standardization-related matters, or lack of financial resources to travel to meeting sites, which are factors with impact in terms of widening the existing knowledge gap;
- g)* that technological needs and realities vary from country to country and region to region, and in many cases developing countries do not have opportunities or mechanisms to make them known;

h) that, for developing countries at the initial stage of introducing and/or switching to a new technology, it is important to have guidelines for the new technology in question that can be used to develop a national standard, which would make it possible to introduce or switch to the new technology in a timely manner;

i) the need for high-quality, demand-driven international standards, which should be developed rapidly in line with the principles of global connectivity, openness, affordability, reliability, interoperability and security, and which are critical for generating confidence for further investments, specifically in telecommunication/ICT infrastructure;

j) digital transformation through the emergence of key technologies, enabling new services and applications and promoting the building of the information society and progress towards sustainable development, which must be taken into account in the work of ITU-T;

k) that cooperation and collaboration with other standardization bodies and relevant consortia and forums are key to avoiding duplication of work and achieving efficient use of resources;

l) that rapidly evolving technology continues to create a standardization gap between developed and developing countries, and this gap is an obstacle for countries to transition towards the development of their economy, including the digital economy, enabled by access to affordable and interoperable technologies,

considering further

that the achievements of ITU-T in transformative digital technologies will contribute towards achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

taking into account

a) that developing countries could benefit from improved capability in the application and development of standards;

- b)* that ITU-T and ITU-R activities and the telecommunication/ICT market could also benefit from better involvement of developing countries in standards-making and standards application;
- c)* that initiatives to assist in bridging the standardization gap are intrinsic to, and are a high priority task of, the Union;
- d)* that although ITU is making efforts to reduce the standardization gap, major disparities in knowledge and management of standards remain between developing and developed countries;
- e)* that WTSA adopted Resolutions 32 (Rev. Hammamet, 2016) and 44 and 54 (Rev. Geneva, 2022), all of which share the clear objective of contributing to bridging the standardization gap between developing and developed countries by means of:
- i)* providing installations, facilities and capacities in electronic working methods in ITU-T meetings, workshops and training courses, especially for developing countries in order to promote their participation;
 - ii)* intensifying the participation of the ITU regional offices in the activities of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau, in order to promote and coordinate standardization activities in their regions, to apply the relevant parts of the resolution, and to initiate campaigns aimed at encouraging the affiliation to ITU of new Sector Members, Associates and Academia from developing countries;
 - iii)* inviting the new regions and Member States to create regional groups within the sphere of the ITU-T study groups, and to create corresponding regional standardization bodies in order to work closely with the ITU-D study groups and the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group;

f) Resolution 37 (Rev. Kigali, 2022), on bridging the digital divide, which aims at the establishment of international methods and specific mechanisms to strengthen international cooperation for narrowing the digital divide, including through implementation of studies or projects and activities, in collaboration with ITU-R, with a view to building capacities in efficient use of the orbit/spectrum resource for the provision of terrestrial, stratospheric and space-based technologies, including radiocommunication technologies, in order to support utilization of the orbit/spectrum resource to stimulate broadband development and bridge the digital divide, especially in the developing countries, in accordance with the WSIS Geneva Plan of Action and Tunis Agenda;

g) that joint meetings of regional groups of study groups, in particular if concatenated with a regional workshop and/or a meeting of a regional standardization body and meetings of the regional organizations, such as the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL), the Regional Commonwealth in the Field of Communications (RCC), the African Telecommunications Union (ATU), the Council of Arab Ministers of Telecommunication and Information represented by the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States (LAS), the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) and the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT), could encourage the participation of developing countries in those meetings and increase the effectiveness of such meetings;

h) that holding ITU meetings in developing countries has shown the potential to increase the participation of ITU members from the region concerned in those meetings,

resolves to instruct the Secretary-General and the Directors of the three Bureaux

1 to work closely with each other on the follow-up and implementation of this resolution, as well as Resolutions 32 (Rev. Hammamet, 2016) and 44 and 54 (Rev. Geneva, 2022) of WTSA, Resolutions 37 and 47 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) of WTDC and Resolution ITU-R 7-4 (Rev. Sharm el-Sheikh, 2019) of the Radiocommunication Assembly, in order to step up intended actions and to reduce the standardization gap between developing and developed countries;

2 to maintain a close coordination mechanism among the three Sectors at the regional level for bridging the digital divide, through activities carried out by the ITU regional offices to that end;

- 3 to engage ITU regional offices in activities related to bridging the standardization gap, including the necessary assistance to raise awareness within developing countries;
- 4 to provide developing countries with assistance to enhance capacity building in the standardization field, including through collaboration with the relevant academia, in close collaboration between ITU-T and ITU-R, and taking into consideration the activities carried out by the ITU Academy training centres and other capacity-building initiatives of the Telecommunication Development Bureau;
- 5 to identify ways and means to support the participation of representatives of developing countries, including prioritizing fellowships for those who submit contributions to attend the meetings of the three Sectors of ITU and the dissemination of information on standardization;
- 6 to further collaborate with the relevant regional organizations and support their work in this area;
- 7 to strengthen the mechanisms for preparing and submitting reports on the implementation of the action plan associated with Resolution 44 (Rev. Geneva, 2022), taking into account the four-year rolling operational plans of each Bureau;
- 8 to continue collaboration at the regional level in order to lend further impetus to the development of ITU-T's Bridging the Standardization Gap (BSG) programme in these regions;
- 9 to promote equal access to fully virtual ITU meetings and physical ITU meetings with remote participation, to the maximum extent possible;
- 10 to promote the timely development of guidelines for developing countries on the basis of ITU-R and ITU-T recommendations, particularly those related to priority standardization issues, including the introduction of and switchover to new technologies, as well as the preparation and application of ITU recommendations;

11 to effectively consolidate all guidelines, recommendations, technical reports, best practices and use cases developed by ITU-R and ITU-T, through the use of ITU web-based tools, and to identify strategies and mechanisms to facilitate and allow Member States to proactively use these tools to hasten the transfer of knowledge;

12 to encourage the participation of members, particularly Academia, from developing countries in ITU's activities towards bridging the standardization gap, including through, whenever possible, the holding of workshops and study group and other meetings in the regions,

invites Member States and Sector Members

to make voluntary contributions (financial and in-kind) to the fund for bridging the standardization gap, as well as to undertake concrete actions to support ITU's actions and the initiatives of its three Sectors and its regional offices in this matter,

invites Member States

1 to study the possibility of implementing "national standardization secretariats", taking into account the guidelines provided under the ITU-T BSG programme, in particular in developing countries;

2 to promote active participation and propose candidates for study group chairmanship and vice-chairmanship positions in the three ITU Sectors, particularly from developing countries;

3 to continue the creation of national and regional standardization bodies, as appropriate, and encourage the involvement of these entities in ITU standardization work and the coordination of meetings with ITU-T regional groups, mainly to enable developing countries to communicate about their standardization priorities and requirements;

4 to host regional group and study group meetings as well as international or regional events (forums, workshops, etc.) related to ITU standardization activities in particular in developing countries;

5 to urge national small and medium enterprises, academia and relevant actors, in particular from developing countries, to participate in ITU's standardization activities.

(Marrakesh, 2002) – (Rev. Antalya, 2006) – (Rev. Guadalajara, 2010) – (Rev. Busan, 2014) – (Rev. Dubai, 2018) – (Rev. Bucharest, 2022)
