



INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT BUREAU

WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE (WTDC-98)

Valletta, Malta, 23 March - 1 April 1998

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PLENARY MEETING

MINUTES

OF THE

TENTH PLENARY MEETING

Tuesday, 31 March 1998, at 1935 hours

Acting Chairman: Mr. E. BORG (Malta)

Subjects discussed

Documents

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1 Assistance to the Palestinian Authority (continued) (Documents 126 and 195)

1.1 The **representative of Germany** considered that Documents 126 and 195 dealt mainly with political questions, which should be dealt with in other, more appropriate forums.

1.2 The **representative of South Africa**, speaking on behalf of the African Group, expressed support for the principle of assistance to the Palestinian Authority. Her delegation considered that in certain circumstances it was difficult, if not impossible, to separate development matters from political issues, as experience in South Africa had shown, where for many years telecommunications had been developed only for the benefit of certain sections of the population. She appealed to participants to make every effort to find an amicable solution to the problem of Palestinian telecommunication development.

1.3 The **representatives of Malaysia, Niger, Sudan, Djibouti, Yemen and the Gambia** expressed full support for Documents 126 and 195, asserting that the issues raised therein related not to politics but to technical issues concerning telecommunication development, with which WTDC-98 was fully concerned.

1.4 The **Acting Chairman**, observing that informal negotiations had been taking place between Israel and the Palestinian Authority since the beginning of the Conference in an attempt to achieve agreement, suggested that a small drafting group be set up to produce, possibly with the assistance of the representative of the Legal Affairs Unit, a draft resolution which would be acceptable to all parties. The **representative of Liberia** supported that suggestion.

1.5 The **representative of Syria** said that he could agree to the proposal to set up a drafting group but not to the inclusion of the representative of the Legal Affairs Unit, whose function was to advise the Secretary-General and not the Conference. It should be emphasized that since the start of the discussions on the question of assistance to the Palestinian Authority overwhelming support for Documents 126 and 195 had been expressed by those who had taken the floor. The **representative of Saudi Arabia** supported that statement.

1.6 The **representative of Lebanon** stressed that the Documents 126 and 195 reflected the discussions in the Arab Group and the Islamic Group, which, if not taken into account, might be interpreted as a slight to the countries concerned. The **representative of Tunisia** said that he would prefer the debate to take place in the Plenary rather than in a drafting group.

1.7 The **observer for Palestine** expressed regret that during the informal negotiations which had been taking place during the Conference, strong resistance had been met from the United States of America. Clear support for assistance to the Palestinian Authority had been expressed during discussions in the Plenary, which, he stressed, concerned development rather than political matters and had considerable implications for the social and economic situation of the Palestinian people. He hoped that the drafting group would be chaired by an officer of the Conference rather than the representative of the ITU Legal Affairs Unit.

1.8 The **representative of Saudi Arabia**, speaking on behalf of the co-sponsors of Document 195, supported the establishment of a drafting group provided that it was composed of representatives present at the Plenary Meeting and that it was made clear that the members of the drafting group were in no way parties to any bilateral discussions between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, but were to discuss technical matters of concern to the countries participating in the Conference. The **representative of Syria** supported that position.

1.9 After further brief comments by the **Acting Chairman**, the **Secretary-General** and the **representatives of Syria** and **Saudi Arabia**, it was **agreed** that a drafting group chaired by the Acting Chairman of the Conference, with a balanced geographical representation, would be set up to produce a draft resolution on assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

2 Report of the Budget Control Committee (Document 221)

2.1 The **Chairman of the Budget Control Committee**, introducing Document 221, said that the Committee had discussed topics including: the agreement between the Government of Malta and ITU; the organization and facilities available to delegates; the budget of WTDC-98, which had been estimated at approximately 2 million Swiss francs, of which about 1.1 million was for direct expenditure and 968 000 for documentation, including translation; the situation of the accounts of the Conference as at 27 March 1998, which showed that its total expenditure was estimated at 2 283 000 Swiss francs, representing an excess of 140 000 Swiss francs. Expenditure had risen by 246 000 Swiss francs in comparison with WTDC-94. The Secretary-General was requested to study measures, including the introduction of electronic means, to limit the volume of documentation for future conferences. It had proved impossible to estimate the full cost of implementing the decisions taken by the Conference, as no decisions had yet been taken on the Valletta Action Plan. It had been suggested, however, that at future world conferences the financial implications of proposals might be costed before the proposals were adopted. The Committee requested BDT to examine all decisions of the Conference and to include their financial implications in the draft Financial Plan 2000-2003 to be submitted to the Council and forthcoming Plenipotentiary Conference. It was also suggested that, as it had proved extremely difficult to comply with the requirements of Article 34 of the Convention, that article might have to be reviewed. The report also contained details concerning contributions by ITU-D Sector Members and voluntary contributions, and included three annexes with relevant financial data.

2.2 The **representative of Saudi Arabia**, welcoming the report, said in connection with the implementation of BDT resolutions that it was essential that the question of the budget ceiling should be discussed by the Council and Plenipotentiary Conference. The **representative of Lebanon**, supporting that view, requested that in establishing a budget ceiling, provision be made for the translation of certain important texts.

2.3 The report of the Budget Control Committee (Document 221) was **approved**.

3 Draft Resolution on alternative calling procedures (Document 235)

3.1 The **Secretary**, introducing the draft resolution in Document 235, said that every effort had been made to produce a balanced text reflecting previous discussions in Plenary.

3.2 The **representative of Mali**, supporting the draft resolution, suggested that *recalling* c)ii) should include a more specific reference to exchange of experience and additional studies.

3.3 It was so **agreed**.

3.4 The draft resolution in Document 235, as amended, was **approved**.

4 Communication by the European Commission on the information society and development: the role of the European Union (Document 199)

4.1 The **representative of the European Commission** introduced Document 199, which contained an analysis of the current situation, illustrating the contribution that could be made by the European Union to the development of the global information society, and an outline of activities already undertaken by the European Commission in the field of technology. Rather than to establish a new programme, the aim had been to take into account a new, information-technology dimension in existing instruments which concerned, in particular, development assistance and economic cooperation. The proposals in the document, which were based on the far-reaching changes brought about by the emerging information society, sought to achieve universal access to new developments in technology and exchanges in trade, knowledge and culture. It was vital to take due account of expanding telecommunication development as a driving force in regional economic integration, of which the European Commission had special experience. The document focused mainly on regulatory aspects, the proper application of agreements, interconnection and standard-setting.

4.2 Document 199 was **noted**.

5 Sixth series of texts submitted by the Editorial Committee (Document 237)

5.1 The sixth series of texts submitted by the Editorial Committee was **approved**.

6 Seventh series of texts submitted by the Editorial Committee (Document 238)

6.1 The **Acting Chairman** indicated that draft Resolution GTPLEN-PS-1 and Annex 1 thereto were based on Document 220 submitted by the Working Group of the Plenary on the private sector and included elements of the TDAB report.

6.2 The **Chairman of the Working Group of the Plenary on the private sector** expressed his satisfaction with the text, which had been drawn up in a domain where no provision had existed at the outset of the Conference. The resulting programme would enable the role of the private sector in the work of ITU-D to be enhanced, and thus development gaps to be closed more rapidly.

6.3 On a proposal by the **representative of Russia**, supported by the **representatives of Syria, Canada, Japan and Greece**, it was **agreed** to amend the title of the draft Resolution to read as follows: "TDAB subgroup on private sector issues".

6.4 The **representative of Syria** observed that, in regard to *considering d*), one could not speak of recommendations of the ITU-2000 Group as such. Some texts produced by the Group had been submitted to the Council for consideration and final approval. He suggested that the paragraph be deleted.

6.5 The **representative of Lebanon** agreed with the previous speaker and added that, given that the ITU-2000 Group no longer existed as such, it would be best to indicate the exact number of the Resolution approved by the Council at its next session. He supported the idea of setting up a TDAB subgroup on the private sector. The **representative of Bulgaria** remarked, in reference to *considering d*), that even if the ITU-2000 Group had been disbanded its report still existed.

6.6 The **Chairman of TDAB**, considering that the text of the Resolution before the meeting was excellent and conveyed perfectly the desire of all administrations to see the private sector's role in the work of the Union enhanced, pointed out that, nevertheless, the idea of setting up a TDAB subgroup should be submitted to TDAB itself so that its officers might give an opinion on the text, not on its substance but on its form.

6.7 The **representative of Russia**, returning to *considering d)*, pointed out that although the report of the ITU-2000 Group did indeed exist, it had not been considered by the Council, and that it would therefore indeed be appropriate, for the sake of precision, to give the exact number of the resolution approved by the Council in that regard. In response to the intervention by the Chairman of TDAB, he was of the opinion that the text of the Resolution did not have to be submitted to the officers of TDAB for consideration since the Board did not form part of the structure of the World Conference.

6.8 The **representative of Mali** agreed with the text of the Resolution in general terms, but had three observations: first, in § 8 in Annex 1, he asked for an explanation of the term "more closely coordinated BDT support"; second, in reference to § 9 in Annex 1, he asked what budget was being referred to; and third, with a view to strengthening private sector participation, he proposed that a new § 11 be added in Annex 1, reading as follows: "establishment of a mechanism to evaluate private sector participation".

6.9 The **representative of Syria** suggested, for the sake of clarity, that the first phrase in *resolves 1* be deleted, and that the paragraph begin "to establish a subgroup of TDAB ...".

6.10 The **representative of Senegal** agreed that, for reasons of form, the introductory phrase should be deleted. With reference to the substance, the Conference should in his view be invited to ask TDAB to create within itself a subgroup on private sector issues, rather than being asked to make a decision on the establishment of the subgroup. To conclude, he proposed the deletion of *resolves 3*, the wording of which seemed dangerous to him because it gave the impression that an exclusive domain was reserved unto ITU-D, whereas the Union's three Sectors did not operate in isolation from one another but were thoroughly engaged in institution-wide collaboration.

6.11 The **representative of France** wondered how, according to § 4 in Annex 1, the TDAB subgroup could be responsible for "the establishment of national committees or associations ...". The **Chairman of the Working Group of the Plenary on the private sector** indicated that the points in the mandate set forth in Annex 1 had been taken word for word from the Appendix to Resolution 2 of the TDAB report, and were cited only for reference.

6.12 The **representative of Jamaica** drew attention to the first bulleted point in Annex 1, which, in his view, gave the private sector a role that did not fit strictly into the framework of a partnership with TDAB on development issues. He suggested that the wording in question be redrafted.

6.13 The **representative of Syria** warned that the text of the Resolution before the meeting, as drafted, was unconstitutional.

6.14 The **Acting Chairman**, agreeing with the view expressed by the representative of Russia, proposed that the text of the draft Resolution be sent back to the Working Group of the Plenary on the private sector, and that TDAB members and all interested representatives could join with the Working Group so that it might take into account all the comments and proposals made with a view to presenting a revised text at the next Plenary Meeting.

6.15 It was so **agreed**.

6.16 The **Chairman of TDAB**, agreeing that the comment by the representative of Russia was well founded, stated that he was willing to assist the Working Group personally in revising the text of the Resolution as to its form.

7 Eighth series of texts submitted by the Editorial Committee (Document 239)

7.1 The **Secretary of Committee B** introduced Document 239 containing draft Resolutions COMB-4 (Public service broadcasting), COMB-5 (Non-discriminatory access to modern telecommunication facilities and services), COMB-6 (Telecommunications in rural, isolated and poorly served areas), COMB-7 (Implementation of national, regional, inter-regional and global projects) and COMB-8 (Telecommunication resources for disaster mitigation and relief operations), and Recommendation COMB-B (Telemedicine).

Draft Resolution COMB-4 (Public service broadcasting)

7.2 The **representative of Syria**, supported by the **representative of Germany**, was of the view that draft Resolution COMB-4 went beyond the Conference's mandate, and that, moreover, a resolution was inappropriate in that regard because there was already a Question concerning public service broadcasting.

7.3 The **Chairman of Committee B** replied that the draft Resolution in question, which was very important to developing countries, had been debated at length in committee and that any decision to withdraw the text should not be made in haste.

7.4 The **representative of France** indicated that while he would not go so far as to reject the draft Resolution, which was indeed of great interest to developing countries, he nevertheless felt that ITU/BDT should not become involved in regulatory activities. Thus, the last two lines of *resolves* 3 posed a problem of substance. He proposed that the technical aspect of the activity being entrusted to ITU/BDT should be stressed, and that the end of the sentence be amended to read as follows: "... as well as to guarantee access, at the technical level, to programme libraries and archives worldwide".

7.5 The **representative of Mali** approved of the draft Resolution, which took into account the observations and proposals expressed in committee. Nevertheless, he would prefer the term "public service broadcasters" in *resolves* 3, 5 and 6 to be replaced by "public service broadcasting institutions".

7.6 The **Acting Chairman** proposed that draft Resolution COMB-4, which seemed to him not to be altogether satisfactory as to either its form or its substance, be withdrawn.

7.7 The **representative of Switzerland** supported that proposal, which he thought a wise one. Associating himself with the statement by the representative of France on the question of regulation, he added that access to archives raised the issue of copyright, which did not fall within the purview of the Conference.

7.8 The **Chairman of Committee B** asked that the text of draft Resolution COMB-4 nevertheless be brought to the attention of the appropriate Study Group so that the issue raised might subsequently be re-examined. The **representative of Syria** noted that several of the provisions under *resolves* established requirements not taken into consideration in the corresponding Question.

7.9 The **representative of South Africa**, whilst associating herself with the idea of withdrawing the draft Resolution under consideration, said that she was concerned. Given the convergence of broadcasting, telecommunications and information technology, she regretted that the Conference could not produce a resolution on broadcasting, which was, after all, an integral part of telecommunications.

7.10 It was **agreed** that draft Resolution COMB-4 be withdrawn.

Draft Recommendation COMB-B (Telemedicine)

7.11 The **representative of Syria** indicated with reference to *recommends* 4 of the draft that the involvement of possible partners for sponsoring pilot projects did not fall within the terms of reference of ITU-D Study Group 2, and suggested that the words "together with ITU-D Study Group 2" be deleted. The **representative of Canada**, stressing the importance ascribed to telemedicine in his country, expressed his agreement with the draft Recommendation, with that deletion.

7.12 The **representative of Jamaica**, pointing to all the work being done in cooperation with private sector partners, wondered why those same partners' contributions could not be received through Study Group 2, and whether the suggestion that the phrase in question be deleted was indeed in keeping with the new spirit of partnership so often evoked. The **representative of Uganda**, sharing that view, expressed his support for the Recommendation in its entirety.

7.13 The **representative of Mali** supported the Recommendation and the suggestion that the deletion in *recommends* 4 be made, and proposed for the sake of consistency that "Study Group 2" in *recommends* 5 be replaced by "BDT". The **representative of Lebanon** supported that proposal and expressed his approval for the draft Recommendation.

7.14 The **representative of Syria** having pointed out that the provision contained in *recommends* 5 was consistent with the terms of reference of Study Group 2, the **Acting Chairman** proposed that the meeting approve draft Recommendation COMB-B, with *recommends* 4 amended by deletion of the words "together with ITU-D Study Group 2".

7.15 It was so **agreed**.

Draft Resolution COMB-5 (Non-discriminatory access to modern telecommunication facilities and services)

7.16 **Approved**.

Draft Resolution COMB-6 (Telecommunications in rural, isolated and poorly served areas)

7.17 In response to comments by the **representatives of Israel** and **Cameroon** concerning the appropriateness of including the item "Commercial approach" in draft Resolution COMB-6, the **Director of BDT**, supported by the **representative of Mali**, indicated that all the principles set forth under *resolves* had been recommended by ITU-D Study Group 2 and were in accordance with the Resolutions approved by the Abidjan and Beirut conferences.

7.18 The **representatives of Syria, Mali, Israel** and **France** proposed that the text of *requests the Director of BDT* 2 be replaced by "to continue efforts to promote, in particular, the optimum use of all available new technologies", so as to broaden the scope of the provision by eliminating any reference to a single programme.

7.19 It was so **agreed**.

7.20 Draft Resolution COMB-6, as amended, was **approved**.

Draft Resolution COMB-7 (Implementation of national, regional, inter-regional and global projects)

7.21 The **representative of the United States** pointed out that *resolves* 3 of draft Resolution COMB-7 should be drafted to sound less coercive, and proposed that the phrase "Member States should contribute" be replaced by "Member States should consider contributing". He also asked who, under *resolves* 6, was to assist in the implementation of new projects such as telemedicine.

7.22 The **representative of Syria**, agreeing with the view expressed by the representative of the United States in regard to *resolves* 3, proposed that the text be amended to read as follows: "that Member States should be encouraged to contribute ...". In addition, in reference to Recommendation 9 of the Beirut Conference, he very much regretted the absence of any mention of transferring a portion of TELECOM surpluses to help fund regional projects.

7.23 The **representative of Liberia** expressed a preference for the amendment to *resolves* 3 put forward by the representative of the United States because it seemed more flexible. The **representative of Mali** supported the proposal and the observation expressed by the representative of Syria.

7.24 The **Director of BDT**, responding to the representative of Syria, confirmed that it was planned to transfer a portion of TELECOM surpluses to help fund the reactivation of such regional projects as MODARABTEL, EUROTTELDEV and PANAFTEL. The **representative of Syria**, supported by the **representative of Lebanon**, asked for it to be placed on record that the statement by the Director of BDT was unanimously approved by the Conference.

7.25 It was so **agreed**.

7.26 The **representative of Lebanon** asked, for the sake of objectivity, that the word "completed" be deleted from *resolves* 5.

7.27 The **representative of France**, supported by the **representative of Spain**, suggested that, for the sake of consistency, the final phrase "for example the Africa-ONE with Oxygen projects, etc." be deleted from *resolves* 6.

7.28 The **representative of Lebanon** said that the reference to those two major projects, which were very important for developing countries, posed no difficulty for him, all the more so given that it had been the subject of a long discussion in committee.

7.29 The **representative of Mali** favoured deleting the reference in question in order not to offend sensibilities with regard to other projects. In the second-to-last line of *resolves* 6, he proposed, supported by the **representative of Senegal**, that the term "merge/group" be replaced by "integrate/group".

7.30 The **representative of Syria** having queried the meaning of the last sentence in *resolves* 6, the **Secretary of Committee B** stated that it was the result of a compromise reached by the Committee after lengthy discussion.

7.31 After a brief exchange of views concerning the wording of *resolves* 6, in which the **representatives of Greece, the United States and Syria** took part, the **Director of BDT** proposed that *resolves* 5 and 6 be recast as follows: after "that efforts should be undertaken" there would come a subparagraph a) beginning "to reactivate the MODARABTEL ..." and ending "and

industrialization projects"; then would come a subparagraph b) beginning "to assist in the implementation ..." and ending with "on different subjects"; and finally there would be a subparagraph c) beginning "efforts should also be made ..." and ending "with similar content/objectives".

7.32 It was so **agreed**.

7.33 Draft Resolution COMB-7, as amended, was **approved**.

Draft Resolution COMB-8 (Telecommunication resources for disaster mitigation and relief operations)

7.34 **Approved**, subject to editorial amendments.

7.35 The eighth series of texts submitted by the Editorial Committee, as amended, was **approved**, with the exception of draft Resolution COMB-4 which was withdrawn.

The meeting rose at 2240 hours.

The Secretary:
H. PIETERSE

The Acting Chairman:
E. BORG