

RESOLUTION 58 (Rev. Baku, 2025)

Telecommunication/information and communication technology accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs

The World Telecommunication Development Conference (Baku, 2025),

recognizing

- a) Resolution 70/1 of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), on transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- b) Resolution 175 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on telecommunication/information and communication technology (ICT) accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;
- c) Resolution 70 (Rev. New Delhi, 2024) of the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly, on telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, including the studies, initiatives and events on the subject conducted by the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) and in particular ITU-T Study Group 21, on the accessibility of multimedia systems and services for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;
- d) Resolution ITU-R 67-2 (Rev. Dubai 2023) of the Radiocommunication Assembly, on telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, including the initiatives, recommendations and reports carried out by the ITU Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R) and the work of its relevant study groups to support the needs of, and protect, persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;
- e) Article 12 of the International Telecommunication Regulations, adopted by the World Conference on International Telecommunications (Dubai, 2012), which states that Member States should promote access for persons with disabilities to international telecommunication services, taking into account the relevant ITU-T Recommendations;

- f)* the United Nations flagship report "Disability and Development Report, 2018", which sees telecommunication/ICT accessibility as a critical element for ensuring inclusion and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, and UNGA Resolution 73/142, which encourages Member States to promote access to information and communication, including information and communication technologies and systems, to ensure that accessibility is promoted as a means of achieving inclusive societies and development;
- g)* the United Nations flagship report "Disability and Development Report, 2024", on accelerating the realization of the SDGs by, for and with persons with disabilities, which aims to place disability squarely at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and address the need to accelerate efforts to achieve the SDGs for persons with disabilities;
- h)* UNGA Resolution 79/149, which encourages Member States to promote access to and the accessibility of information and communication, including information and communication technologies and systems and accessible telecommunication/ICT devices and technologies, and to ensure that accessibility is promoted to achieve inclusive societies and development;
- i)* the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy¹, which reaffirms that the full and complete realization of the human rights of all persons with disabilities is an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the Secretary-General's annual reports² to UNGA to monitor the progress made by the United Nations system in integrating disability inclusion and implementing the strategy,

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/>

² <https://www.un.org/disabilitystrategy/sreport>

recognizing further

- a) the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) Digital Inclusion initiative, which promotes telecommunication/ICT accessibility and use for the economic and social development of persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs and the work under the relevant ITU-D study Question on telecommunication/ICT accessibility to enable inclusive communication, in particular for persons with disabilities;
- b) the Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs (G3ict), an ITU-D Sector Member and flagship partnership initiative of the United Nations Global Alliance for ICT and Development, and its activities;
- c) the Model ICT Accessibility Policy Report for policy-makers, regulators and service providers, produced by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) in partnership with G3ict and available online, in order to: i) facilitate the development of best policies and strategies implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD); and ii) set forth action steps for establishing an effective policy framework;
- d) the ITU-D report "Ageing in a digital world – from vulnerable to valuable, 2021" and *Towards building inclusive digital communities: ITU toolkit and self-assessment for ICT accessibility implementation* (2023), including definitions and key principles related to ICT accessibility;
- e) the related issues being examined in the work of ITU-T and ITU-R in relation to telecommunication/ICT accessibility;
- f) the Internet Governance Forum Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability, sponsored by the Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau and in partnership with ITU-T, as well as involving the participation of ITU-D, in order to promote equal access to the information society by addressing issues of accessibility in relation to Internet governance and digital policies;
- g) the related resolutions from the Global Standards Collaboration meetings;

h) Resolution 214 (Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and telecommunications/ICTs;

i) activities relating to the development of new standards (e.g. ISO TC 159, JTC 1 SC35, IEC TC100, ETSI TC HF and W3C WAI), and the implementation and maintenance of existing standards (e.g. ISO 9241-171);

j) the "Implementation toolkit for accessible telehealth services", developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and ITU in response to the growing challenges that persons with disabilities and other marginalized populations experience when accessing and using telehealth platforms around the world;

k) the adoption by UNGA, in September 2024, of the Global Digital Compact, in Annex I to the Pact for the Future, which includes digital accessibility requirements with a commitment to: "increase the availability, accessibility and affordability of digital technology platforms, services, software and educational curricula [...] and accessible user interfaces for persons with disabilities" (see UNGA Resolution 79/1, Annex I, § 13 (b)),

considering

a) that WHO estimates that over 1.3 billion of the world's inhabitants live with some form of disability, and that there are different types of disabilities (e.g. physical, cognitive and sensory impairments), each requiring special considerations when designing telecommunication/ICT public policy, and it is to be expected that, in the future, the prevalence of disabilities will rise because of the increasing population of older persons and the risk of disability is greater among older persons;

b) that UNCRPD, which came into force on 3 May 2008, requires States Parties to take appropriate measures;

c) that UNCRPD recognizes that there is discrimination on the basis of disability if there is denial of reasonable accommodation to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise of all human rights and fundamental freedoms;

- d) that States Parties to UNCRPD are required to collect disaggregated information for formulating and implementing and following up on policies to give effect to that Convention, and helping to identify and address barriers faced by persons with disabilities in exercising their rights;
- e) that the outcome document of the UNGA high-level meeting on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities considers, *inter alia*, that the universal design approach should be followed in ensuring accessibility of information, accessible devices and other ICTs, including in remote or rural areas, as a means of achieving such goals, so that persons with disabilities can achieve their fullest potential throughout their lives;
- f) that UNGA Resolution 66/288 reaffirms the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other international instruments relating to human rights and international law and the responsibilities of all States, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations, to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability age or other status;
- g) that UNGA Resolution 77/189 urges Member States to ensure affordable and accessible Internet for persons with disabilities, and to include them and their representative organizations at every stage of development of ICTs;
- h) that United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 55/8 (2024) calls for improved accessibility within the United Nations system, ensuring that system facilities, services and Internet resources are fully accessible to persons with disabilities;
- i) that UNGA Resolution 61/106 adopting UNCRPD requests the Secretary-General to implement progressively standards and guidelines for the accessibility of facilities and services of the United Nations system, taking into account relevant provisions of the Convention;

j) that General Comment No. 2 (2014) of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, on Article 9: Accessibility, advocates for the promotion of access for persons with disabilities to new information and communication technologies and systems, including the Internet;

k) that maximizing access to telecommunication/ICT services, equipment, software and applications for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs will enhance digital literacy and facilitate equal opportunities in education, health care and employment;

l) that persons with disabilities, both individually and through relevant organizations, should be actively involved in the process development of legal and regulatory provisions, public policies and standards, pursuant to the rationale of "nothing about us without us",

taking into account

a) that the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) acknowledged that special attention should be given to the needs of older persons, persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs: i) when elaborating national cyberstrategies, including educational, administrative and legislative measures; ii) for using ICTs in education and human-resources development; iii) in order that equipment and services offer easy and affordable access, under the principles of universal design and accessible technology; iv) for promoting telework and increasing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities; v) for creating content that is pertinent to persons with disabilities; and vi) for creating the required abilities for the use of ICTs by persons with disabilities³;

³ Geneva Declaration of Principles, §§ 13 and 30; Geneva Plan of Action, §§ 9 e) and f), 19 and 23; Tunis Commitment, §§ 18 and 20; Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, § 90 c) and e).

- b)* that the implementation of the relevant WSIS action lines will contribute to the achievement of SDG 9 target 9.c (Significantly increase access to ICT and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries);
- c)* the need to apply accessibility principles and features in relation to telecommunication/ICT services, equipment, software and applications in order to be accessible to all, including persons with specific needs, namely: universal design, equal access, functional equivalence and affordability;
- d)* that telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs should be achieved through the development of coherent policies and cooperation between government bodies, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, civil society and persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs themselves;
- e)* the importance of coordination and the exchange of information on issues concerning persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs among relevant United Nations bodies in order to establish a comprehensive approach to accessibility;
- f)* the prevailing difference in telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs in the regions, in countries, and within each country, emphasizing that 80 per cent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries⁴, according to the United Nations Development Programme;

⁴ These include the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

g) the potential of accessible technology to empower young persons with disabilities with essential tools for learning, communication and independent living, in order to help them overcome barriers, reach their full potential and become actively engaged as members of society;

h) that women and girls with disabilities suffer multiple disadvantages, being excluded on account of their gender and their disability,

resolves to instruct the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau

1 to ensure that ITU-D programmes, projects, initiatives or activities take into account, where possible, telecommunication/ICT accessibility issues and/or are adaptable for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;

2 to promote the development and updating of tools and tailored guidelines⁵ for use/reference by Member States in mainstreaming telecommunication/ICT accessibility issues into their national/regional policies and regulations, and in building of necessary capacity, taking into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

3 to assist Member States, as appropriate, in developing their national strategies, including funding strategies, in order to address the needs of persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs in terms of access to telecommunication/ICT services;

4 to continue to work closely with Member States for the sharing and dissemination of best practices, and to encourage them to submit contributions to strengthen efforts in promoting accessibility of telecommunication/ICTs, in order to raise industry awareness of the importance of accessibility of telecommunication/ICT services, equipment, software and applications;

⁵ See ITU, Towards building inclusive digital communities: ITU toolkit and self-assessment for ICT accessibility implementation (2023), which supports ITU members and stakeholders in understanding and implementing ICT accessibility at national and regional levels: <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Digital-Inclusion/Pages/ICT-digital-accessibility/toolkits/towards-building-inclusive-digital-communities/2023/default.aspx>.

5 to support the holding of seminars, symposia or forums on telecommunication/ICT accessibility, involving a wide range of stakeholders, and also support the preparation of the corresponding outcome documents;

6 to collaborate and cooperate with relevant United Nations entities with a mandate to address accessibility issues and with international and regional organizations for persons with disabilities in order to support the social and economic inclusion of persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs through the use of telecommunications/ICTs;

7 to collaborate with ITU-R and ITU-T on issues of telecommunication/ICT accessibility, to take into account the outcomes of their work in preparing toolkits, guidelines and programmes for Member States on telecommunication/ICT accessibility issues and, where necessary, to report to the ITU Council on the outcomes of this collaboration;

8 to consider the development of an internship programme for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs who have expertise in the field of telecommunications/ICTs, so as to build capacity in the development of public policy to meet accessibility requirements;

9 to ensure that the needs of the communities of persons with disabilities are taken into account in the provision of telecommunication/ICT accessibility equipment, services and software, through the work of BDT;

10 to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to drive sustainable solutions and programmes that prioritize accessibility and support inclusive ICT infrastructure;

11 to strengthen the Digital Inclusion programme to promote telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities,

further instructs the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau

- 1 to review, in consultation with the Secretary-General, the accessibility of ITU services and facilities, including meetings and events, to consider taking actions, where appropriate, pursuant to UNGA Resolution 61/106, and to inform Member States and Sector Members about the implementation of such actions, as appropriate;
- 2 to contribute, within the scope of BDT, to uniting efforts for the implementation of the provisions of Resolution 70 (Rev. New Delhi, 2024) and Resolution 175 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022);
- 3 to provide advice to, evaluate and supervise initiatives, projects and programmes, so as to determine their impact in terms of telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, under Resolution 17 (Rev. Baku, 2025) of this conference, on regional initiatives, where appropriate;
- 4 to provide assistance to countries on the development and implementation of accessible telecommunications/ICTs based on tailored solutions;
- 5 to monitor and evaluate the impact of ITU-D accessibility initiatives, identify challenges and opportunities according to relevant key performance indicators,

invites the Plenipotentiary Conference

- 1 to build on and consolidate past accomplishments, by providing the necessary financial and human resources for the effective and sustained integration of telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs within ITU's development activities;

2 to instruct the Secretary-General to bring this resolution to the attention of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in an effort to promote increased coordination and cooperation for development policies, programmes and projects for achieving telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, in line with the principles of universal design, equal access, functional equivalence and affordability, and fully leveraging the available tools, guidelines and standards, to eliminate obstacles and discrimination,

instructs Study Group 1 of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector

1 to assist in identifying the needs of persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs in relation to telecommunication/ICT accessible services, equipment, software and applications;

2 to assist in identifying best practices related to accessible telecommunication/ICT services, equipment, software and applications, based on contributions from Member States, Sector Members and other stakeholders and in collaboration with ITU-T and ITU-R;

3 to promote the exchange of experiences and best practices in terms of accessibility of telecommunication/ICT services, equipment, software and applications for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, aiming to reduce digital inequality and achieve the SDGs,

invites Member States

1 to consider the interests of persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs in the development of legal frameworks, including laws, regulations, policies and guidelines, on telecommunications/ICTs at national and local levels, in order to support the social and economic inclusion of all members of society, taking into account the relevant United Nations activities, principles of equal access, functional equivalence, affordability and universal design;

- 2 to mainstream telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs and to emphasize adopting a comprehensive approach to addressing the matter, which involves taking into consideration accessibility principles in a cross-cutting manner;
- 3 to take the relevant measures to ensure that telecommunication/ICT services, equipment, software and applications are accessible to persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;
- 4 to develop national legal frameworks, including laws, regulations, policies, guidelines or other national and local mechanisms to ensure telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities, based on the principles of equal access, functional equivalence, affordability and universal design, to guarantee accessibility of telecommunication/ICT services, equipment, software and applications;
- 5 to encourage and enable active participation by persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, both as individuals and as organizations, in the policy-making process for telecommunications/ICTs and related areas where ICTs have an impact, by ensuring the accessibility of the consultation process, meetings and/or surveys pursuant to the rationale of "nothing about us without us";
- 6 to consider establishing government procurement policies for accessible telecommunications/ICTs, developed in consultation with persons with disabilities and relevant stakeholders, establishing clear accessibility criteria;
- 7 to raise awareness of the activities and decisions of government bodies, the private sector and non-governmental organizations regarding telecommunication/ICT accessibility ensuring that persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs are fully informed of new opportunities in a timely manner;
- 8 to continue strengthening the collection and analysis and dissemination of data and statistics on disability related to telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs and similarly relevant indicators that will contribute to the design, planning and implementation of public policy in the area of telecommunication/ICT accessibility;

9 to facilitate the introduction and mainstreaming of telecommunication/ICT relay services⁶, captioning and audio description for persons with hearing, speech or vision impairments, or any combination thereof, to ensure accessibility of television programmes and digital television content and multimedia platforms;

10 to consider providing financial incentives on ICT devices and digitally accessible equipment for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, in accordance with the national policies and regulations on this matter;

11 to promote the development of accessible websites, in particular those of high social significance for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, such as e-government services;

12 to support the establishment of educational institutions, in particular at the primary level, other institutions and community centres with accessible equipment, ensuring that they are equipped with accessible telecommunications/ICTs to promote inclusive participation for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;

13 to undertake research and development of telecommunication/ICT equipment and software that are accessible by design;

14 to establish ongoing and permanent collaboration and coordination between developed and developing countries to exchange information, technology and best practices related to telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;

⁶ Telecommunication relay services enable users of different modes of communication (e.g. text, sign, speech) to interact by providing convergence between the modes of communication, usually through human operators.

15 to participate actively in telecommunication/ICT accessibility-related studies in ITU-D, ITU-T and ITU-R, and to promote the representation of persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs in the development process, so as to ensure that their experiences, views and opinions are reflected in all the work carried out by the study groups;

16 to promote the development of comprehensive learning and capacity-building opportunities including train-the-trainer courses and distance learning, to equip persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs with the skills to effectively use telecommunications/ICTs for their social and economic development, for a more inclusive and equitable society;

17 to create dissemination and awareness-raising mechanisms that enable persons with disabilities to learn about the rights that can help them and how to require their enforceability, as well as policies for their benefit, current assistance technologies, and accessible equipment available on the market;

18 to initiate and coordinate development of the tailored solutions to facilitate efficient usage of accessible telecommunications/ICTs in their countries;

19 to promote the use of emerging telecommunications/ICTs, including AI to improve access of telecommunication/ICT services to persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;

20 to seek ways to encourage national manufacturers of smartphones, tablets, computers and other digital devices to integrate accessibility features such as text-to-speech, gesture recognition, contrast enhancement, captioning and tactile interfaces, ensuring inclusive and user-friendly experiences for individuals with disabilities,

invites Sector Members

1 to consider accessibility issues, including the adoption of a self-regulation approach in their activities, in the field of telecommunications/ICTs to promote equal access for all users;

2 to develop, implement and strengthen policies and programmes, as appropriate, to improve access to accessible telecommunications/ICTs for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs to help them to better participate in the socio-economic development activities of their countries;

- 3 to promote research and development of accessible telecommunication/ICT equipment, services, software and applications, ensuring affordability for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;
- 4 to collaborate with Member States in sharing experiences and best practices related to telecommunication/ICT accessibility, including dissemination and awareness-raising to enable persons with disabilities to learn about existing accessible telecommunications/ICTs and tools, and affordable equipment available on the market;
- 5 to promote collaboration to develop inclusive frameworks and policies that integrate accessibility features into telecommunication/ICT products and services and create platforms for testing and launching new accessible products.