

RESOLUTION 82 (Rev. Baku, 2025)

Preserving and promoting multilingualism on the Internet for an inclusive information society

The World Telecommunication Development Conference (Baku, 2025),

considering

- a)* the provisions of Resolutions 101 and 102 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on Internet Protocol-based networks and ITU's role with regard to international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet and on the management of Internet resources, including domain names and addresses, respectively;
- b)* Resolution 133 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on the role of administrations of Member States in the management of internationalized (multilingual) domain names;
- c)* Resolution 154 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on use of the six official languages of the Union on an equal footing;
- d)* Resolution 69 (Rev. Hammamet, 2016) of the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA), on non-discriminatory access and use of Internet resources;
- e)* Resolution 37 (Rev. Baku, 2025) of this conference, on bridging the digital divide;
- f)* Resolution 48 (Rev. New Delhi, 2024) of WTSA, on internationalized (multilingual) domain names;
- g)* Resolution 30 (Rev. Baku, 2025) of this conference, on the role of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

h) that the mission of ITU-D falls within the more general framework of ITU's purposes, laid down in Article 1 of the ITU Constitution, including the mission "to foster international cooperation and solidarity in the delivery of technical assistance to the developing countries and the creation, development and improvement of telecommunication equipment and networks in developing countries", and that, pursuant to No. 118 of the Constitution, ITU-D is required "to discharge, within its specific sphere of competence, the Union's dual responsibility as a United Nations specialized agency and executing agency for implementing projects under the United Nations development system or other funding arrangements so as to facilitate and enhance telecommunication development by offering, organizing and coordinating technical cooperation and assistance activities",

recalling

Resolution 20 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference, on non-discriminatory access to modern telecommunication/information and communication technology (ICT) facilities, services and related applications,

recognizing

a) Articles 19 and 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, to the effect that: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers", and "Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits...";

b) Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, which stipulates that: "In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language", and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966, both Covenants having been designed to impose specific obligations in regard to protection against sexual, religious, racial or other forms of discrimination;

- c) United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992, adopting the Declaration on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, which states that: "States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity";
- d) the United Nations Administrative Committee on Coordination Statement of 1997 on universal access to basic communication and information services, which asserts that: "The information and technology gap and related inequities between industrialized and developing nations are widening: a new type of poverty 'information poverty' looms";
- e) § 25 of the Millennium Declaration approved by UNGA, which refers to measures aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the United Nations in human rights and public information efforts;
- f) UNGA Resolution 35/201 of 16 December 1980, transmitting the recommendation on promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace;
- g) the report drawn up by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Internet Society (ISOC) in 2012, entitled "The relationship between local content, Internet development and access prices", which indicates that there is a strong correlation between the development of local network infrastructure and the growth of local content and highlights: that local content is growing in volume, as a result of investment worldwide; that the composition of local content is evolving, which underscores the importance of Universal Acceptance in ensuring that people from all regions can contribute to and benefit from the growing digital landscape; and that local content is no longer dominated by developed countries, but is increasingly representative of the diversity of multiple cultures, languages and communities existing in the world;

h) the annual Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) Universal Acceptance Readiness Report, which helps users improve the implementation of Universal Acceptance in their systems and highlights Universal Acceptance as fundamental for achieving a digitally inclusive and multilingual Internet,

emphasizing

a) the role played by ITU in the successful organization of the two phases of WSIS, and that the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles and Geneva Plan of Action, adopted in 2003, and the WSIS Tunis Commitment and Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, adopted in 2005, have been endorsed by UNGA;

b) the Geneva Declaration of Principles and its commitment to "build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge";

c) that the Internet is a subject of valid international interest and must flow from full multistakeholder cooperation and participation, including collaboration and coordination between ITU and the technical community¹, to facilitate access for all and guarantee stable and secure functioning of the Internet, having due regard to multilingualism, on the basis of the outcomes of the two phases of WSIS;

d) the role of industry, relevant technical and international organizations, and the top-level domain operator communities in continuing to advance the use of internationalized domain names (IDNs) in the domain name system (DNS);

¹ Including, but not limited to, ICANN, the regional Internet registries, the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), ISOC and the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), on the basis of reciprocity.

- e)* that the Geneva Declaration of Principles, aimed at building the information society: a global challenge in the new millennium, establishes, as one of its fundamental principles, under § B8 (Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content), that "The creation, dissemination and preservation of content in diverse languages and formats must be accorded high priority in building an inclusive information society, paying particular attention to the diversity of supply of creative work and due recognition of the rights of authors and artists. It is essential to promote the production of and accessibility to all content – educational, scientific, cultural or recreational – in diverse languages and formats. The development of local content suited to domestic or regional needs will encourage social and economic development and will stimulate participation of all stakeholders, including people living in rural, remote and marginal areas";
- f)* that IDNs, and more generally ICTs, must be widely accessible to all citizens without regard to gender, age, location, ability or language;
- g)* that relevant national, regional and international organizations are working to increase the deployment of IDNs;
- h)* that e-mail address internationalization (EAI), as an application of IDNs, contributes to the broader goal of the Universal Acceptance of IDNs;
- i)* that Universal Acceptance of IDNs and their applications, including EAI, is fundamental to achieving a digitally inclusive and multilingual Internet that ensures all valid domain names and e-mail addresses can be used by all Internet-enabled applications, devices and systems, and enables Internet users globally to navigate the Internet and associated services in local languages;
- j)* that, while significant progress in the technical development and availability of IDNs in the DNS has been made, Universal Acceptance of IDNs and their applications, including EAI, remains challenging;
- k)* that the Geneva Declaration of Principles also asserts that "The preservation of cultural heritage is a crucial component of identity and self-understanding of individuals that links a community to its past. The information society should harness and preserve cultural heritage for the future by all appropriate methods, including digitization";

l) that, similarly, at the WSIS meeting in Geneva, UNESCO introduced its concept of knowledge societies, emphasizing plurality, diversity and inclusion, and highlighting that the use of ICTs has to take into account universally recognized human rights, focusing on four principles: freedom of expression, universal access to information and knowledge, cultural and linguistic diversity and quality education for all;

m) that the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression (Paris, 2005) stipulates that: "Equitable access to a rich and diversified range of cultural expressions from all over the world and access of cultures to the means of expressions and dissemination constitute important elements for enhancing cultural diversity and encouraging mutual understanding";

n) that UNESCO has provided assistance to Member States in the implementation of the policy guidelines assembled in the recommendations for decision-makers, and carried out various training activities in respect of universal access to information and the promotion and use of multilingualism, in conjunction with the Organization of American States;

o) that the Paris Declaration on Open Educational Resources (OER) of the World OER Congress (Paris, 2012) recommends that States, within their capacities and authority, *inter alia*, promote the understanding and use of open educational resources, facilitate enabling environments for use of ICTs, reinforce the development of strategies and policies on open educational resources and encourage the development and adaptation of open educational resources in a variety of languages and cultural contexts,

taking into account

a) that International Mother Language Day, proclaimed by the UNESCO General Conference in November 1999, has been observed yearly since 2000 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism, and that the 2011 edition focused on the theme of ICTs for the safeguarding and promotion of languages and linguistic diversity;

b) that, in the changing telecommunication/ICT environment, a continuing challenge facing the Union is to remain a pre-eminent intergovernmental organization where Member States, Sector Members and Associates work together to enable the growth and sustained development of telecommunication and information networks and applications, and to facilitate universal access so that people everywhere can participate in, and benefit from, the emerging information society;

c) that ITU is deploying maximum efforts, in collaboration and coordination with competent organizations in the field of Internet governance, to bring the greatest possible benefits to the world community;

d) that, at the operational level, ITU has been carrying out the tasks assigned under the WSIS outcomes, in its capacity as: lead facilitator (along with UNESCO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) for coordinating the multistakeholder implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action; facilitator for Action Lines C2 (Information and communication infrastructure), C4 (Capacity building) and C5 (Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs) and, at UNDP's request, having accepted to play the role of lead facilitator for Action Line C6 (Enabling environment); co-facilitator for Action Lines C1 (Role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development), C3 (Access to information and knowledge), C7 (ICT applications: Benefits in all aspects of life) and C11 (International and regional cooperation); and partner for Action Lines C8 (Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content) and C9 (Media);

e) the 2012 report by the ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Digital Development, which makes it clear that content and broadband-enabled services in local languages as well as the capacities of local communities to create and share content are important drivers of the use of broadband infrastructure by local populations;

f) the 2013 report of the Broadband Commission for Digital Development, which presents a series of strategies that governments worldwide, in particular developing countries² and other entities interested in education, should adopt in order to derive maximum benefit from the advantages offered by ICTs, including promoting mobility of education and open educational resources, supporting the development of content adapted to local contexts and languages, etc., pointing to the need to create ecosystems of online educational applications and services with local and homegrown content, all of which becomes especially relevant during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and possible future pandemics;

g) the relevant goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which aligns with ITU-D priorities to support multilingual access to telecommunication/ICTs,

resolves to instruct the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau, in collaboration with the Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau

to include in the work programmes of relevant ITU-D study groups necessary actions to preserve and promote multilingualism on the Internet and the provision of a huge range of social services, from health to education, with focus on the development of digital content from popular cultures and minority groups using a range of non-mainstream languages which currently have limited coverage on the Internet, in order to contribute from ITU-D's vantage point, with the Member States, to guaranteeing digital inclusion, building an inclusive and plural information society, promoting digital skills and prompting calls for action within the framework of ITU so as to ensure that the importance of preserving linguistic and cultural diversity and the autonomy of traditional communities, such as Indigenous Peoples, is recognized, within the framework and available budgetary resources of ITU-D,

instructs the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau

1 to ensure that all ITU-D programmes, projects and activities account for the need to resolve the issues that hamper the preservation and promotion of Universal Acceptance;

² These include the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

2 to consider holding seminars, symposia or forums for policy-makers, telecommunication/ICT regulators, Sector Members and interested stakeholders, at which public policies for protecting linguistic and cultural diversity of communities, peoples and minority groups and persons with specific needs are presented and discussed, so that their voices are heard, the preservation of their languages is promoted, and their identities, lifestyles, etc., are taken into account;

3 to collaborate with the Radiocommunication Bureau and the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau (TSB), in the spirit of "One ITU", in regard to their activities to promote awareness and mainstream policies, and in the creation of programmes and projects that help developing countries to foster linguistic diversity, multilingualism and Universal Acceptance on the Internet and to bring connectivity to minorities and traditional communities, such as Indigenous Peoples;

4 to work with the Director of TSB to promote the use of IDNs;

5 to collaborate with TSB to raise awareness among Member States and ITU Sector Members of the challenges facing Universal Acceptance and IDNs;

6 to actively engage stakeholders to support and promote multilingualism on the Internet and share progress within the ITU-D membership;

7 to provide advice to, evaluate and supervise projects, initiatives and programmes, so as to determine their impact in terms of preserving and promoting linguistic diversity and multilingualism, under Resolution 17 (Rev. Baku, 2025) of this conference, on resource mobilization, implementation and cooperation for approved regional initiatives, where appropriate;

8 to promote greater cooperation between regional and international organizations, stakeholders and governments in the development and implementation of policies and initiatives to support Universal Acceptance and multilingualism;

9 to report to the ITU Council on the implementation of this resolution,

invites Member States and Sector Members, Academia and Associates, as appropriate

- 1 to participate actively in all international discussions and initiatives for guaranteeing the preservation and promotion of multiculturalism and multilingualism in the digital ecosystem of the Internet and associated services, with a view to ensuring universal access and bringing multilingual societies to life, and strengthening dialogue between cultures, openness and mutual understanding, tolerance towards others, etc.;
- 2 to submit contributions within ITU-D in order to facilitate effective implementation of this resolution;
- 3 to promote capacity building and digital skills which foster the development of local digital content or informative resources in rural contexts and within vulnerable groups of the population, in order to preserve multiculturalism and multilingualism and promote their regional, national and local integration;
- 4 to promote initiatives that allow underserved communities, peoples and minority groups and persons with specific needs to become relevant actors in the development of a multiculturalism and multilingualism in the digital ecosystem of the Internet and associated services;
- 5 to contribute, with UNESCO, which is the facilitator for implementation of WSIS Action Line C8, focusing on concerns and requests for assistance, in particular from developing countries, to facilitating and fostering affordability and availability of international Internet connectivity, and thereby overcome language barriers and increase use of the Internet;
- 6 to contribute to the establishment of regional, national and local strategic plans to promote sites which ensure and foster linguistic diversity and multilingualism in the digital ecosystem of the Internet;
- 7 to contribute to studying appropriate mechanisms for converting digital archives in underrepresented languages, with a view to fostering socio-economic development and information- and knowledge-sharing between communities and groups with specific needs, and so that more and new voices can benefit from the potential of telecommunications/ICTs;

8 to recommend measures within their competencies for cooperation with academia, civil society and other interested and involved stakeholders, under a multistakeholder approach, with a view to reducing disparity, exclusion and discrimination in terms of opportunities, by exploiting the potential that protecting and safeguarding languages not present in the digital ecosystem of the Internet offers;

9 to promote awareness among equipment manufacturers and designers regarding the advantages of introducing in the regions already identified by UNESCO alternative alphabets for languages not present in the digital ecosystem of the Internet, to be used by people with different native languages, and thus contribute to moving forward towards digital inclusion, respecting their cultural identity;

10 to promote Universal Acceptance regarding IDNs and to collaborate and coordinate in enabling their applications, including EAI, in the Internet;

11 to urge all stakeholders to ensure the development and deployment of IDNs in all possible language scripts using their specific character sets to enable users to access and navigate the Internet in their preferred language without hindrance;

12 to promote the concept of Universal Acceptance, recognizing its importance in achieving digitally inclusive and multilingual Internet for all;

13 to play a role in sharing best practices for IDNs and raising user awareness of both IDNs and EAI,

invites the Secretary-General

1 to bring this resolution to the attention of the next plenipotentiary conference, for its consideration, taking into account past accomplishments, by allocating the necessary human resources to make effective contributions to ITU-D's activities for institutionalizing the issue of multilingualism within ITU;

2 to bring this resolution to the attention of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in an effort to promote increased cooperation and coordination for development policies, programmes and projects in order to make progress in linguistic diversity and the Internet, in line with the principles of equitable access, Universal Acceptance, functional equivalence, affordability and universal design, fully harnessing the available tools, guidelines and standards, for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and digital exclusion.