

ITU C&I Forum for the African and Arab regions Tunis, Tunisia, 5-7 November 2012

All the presentations are available in:

<http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Technology/Pages/Events/Event121105.aspx>

Statistics: some 70 Participants from 19 countries. Most of the participants were from regulatory authorities and governments. In addition there were representatives from certification bodies such as SGS and industry such as CISCO, ERICSSON. The event was organized in cooperation with CERT labs and sponsored by Ericsson , Huawei, ST2, ARD/A, TelNet and others.

Speakership and audience: To be noted the good profile of all the speakers with some very good from CERT, Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria. Their knowledge of the themes, experience and ability to deliver presentations highly contributed to better understand the various topics and to help in clarifying the need and contents of next steps forward.

Main issues discussed: ITU C&I Programme, The C&I Business Plan, Action Plan, the four C&I Pillars. Importance of accreditation and certification. Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) and Multilateral Arrangements (MLAs), capacity building and set up of test labs in the regions. Regional experiences, activities of various regional and international institutions, standards organizations, test labs, views from industries, issues concerning counterfeit equipment were also presented.

CISCO with its presence as speaker and Ericsson as sponsor demonstrated, once more, their willingness to continue dialogue with ITU in consultation meetings in the regions (they were present also in the C&I Forum for the Americas) as from the C&I Resolutions approved by the membership.

Beside the presentations of the ITU, those from regional representatives highlighted best practices in some countries e.g. about type approval testing and relevant applied standards, fighting dangerous, non-compliant and counterfeit equipment policies. To be noted the particular importance of the Egyptian experience, presented by NTRA, regarding accreditation, certification and labeling. In 2008 NTRA established its market surveillance department to support the type approval activities and market control. In 2010, Egypt adopted the GSMA Agreement to fight counterfeit equipment, a white list weekly updated of IMEI and a Central Equipment Identity Register (EIR) - IMEI database (3.5 million illegal IMEI mobile handset, 250 000 of which cloned and 500 000 fake). Anyway, some obstacles are still facing implementation of a correct C&I regime such as: consumer standardization awareness, culture of certification mark, low cost of illegal products, conflicts between different governmental institutions, conformity assessment should be submitted with regulator, absence of market surveillance, very weak local manufacturing of ICT TE and no local full compliance test labs.

Speakers encouraged national TE manufacturing, creation of test labs, reinforcing market surveillance, raising consumer awareness, introducing a certification mark, reviewing telecom laws, participation in regional and international standard bodies and training initiatives.

ARNET: Arab Network of Telecom Regulatory Authorities informed on its type approval project (regulations, directives, standards implemented) and encouraged to develop a similar project in Africa that is the second largest mobile voice market in the world after Asia.

Ghana relies mostly on FCC and IEC marks to verify equipment conformance. They expect that this meeting provides suggestions about the way forward. Challenges are: high cost of proprietary equipment, end users affordability, non interoperable hardware and software products, poor QoS delivery, proliferation of sub-standard ICT as result of lack of testing labs, lack of surveillance, lack of understanding test reports and interpretation, capacity building (personnel), regulatory non-compliance. The importance of Res. 76, Res. 47 and Res. 177 were highly considered since their vehement defense at WTSA-08, WTDC-10 and PP-10 respectively with reference to the need of conformity assessment, training and test labs. Ghana is proposing itself as candidate to host a test lab for the western Africa region and fully support the ITU C&I programme, including the conformity database.

Cisco presented a manufacturer's view with respect to product certification schemes. Manufacturers follow paths like Supplier's Declaration of Conformity, Product Certification and type approval as relevant to the product classification.

Cisco is not willing to see additional conformance or certification testing requirements linked to the implementation of the ITU Conformance & Interoperability Programme especially considering interoperability aspects that should be managed mainly by vendors and operators. Conformance or certification testing may increase time to market and impose additional costs on the supplier and its customers. Cisco affirms its commitment to interoperability based on international standards and continues to commit extensive testing resources to enhance interoperability.

Considering that testing is an issue of manufacturers, service providers and regulators, ITU reaffirmed that its intention is to make developing countries aware of conformity assessment and procedures, recognizing what is done by those bodies accredited for certification, accreditation and testing based on international standards and according to market requirements.

Moreover ITU reaffirmed that additional tests, if any, would be market-driven and only decided by experts from the private sector in the ITU study groups when developing Recommendations, as also confirmed at the ITU Council-12, moreover it reminded as tools like MRAs and MLAs are effective to reduce costs of testing and time to market also according to views of organizations working on conformity assessment and certification.

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Interactive sessions: two working groups were organized: Francophone and Anglophone participants discussed in parallel sessions for some three hours on the following questions concerning the four Pillars of the ITU C&I Programme:

1. Main Obstacles to be overcome

2. Local and regional strategies/actions needed
3. Strategies/actions/assistance from international organizations
4. Any other consideration

The separation in groups was made to optimize exchange of views while maintaining the needed critical mass of participants and competence. Discussions were very intense and considered many aspects from different points of view.

Results of interactive groups are shown in annex A and were discussed in the last panel. It was noted conclusions very similar to those reached in similar events in Dhaka and Brasilia showing how the main elements are very common worldwide.

ANNEX A

Interactive sessions: Conclusions

ITU Pillar 1 - Conformity Assessment

A1.1.1 What are the main obstacles that need to be overcome?

- Lack of indigenous Regulations
- Lack of test laboratories
- Political issue
 - Lack of government commitment
 - National priorities over-ride technical considerations
 - Inadequate Policy
- Weak regulatory framework /Lack of Regulatory Framework with Lack of clear and unambiguous national standards
 - Inadequate legal framework
 - Lack of awareness at the Policy-setting level
 - Few actions from the Regulator to transform concepts in reality
- Lack of coordination among different Government wings
- lack of harmonization of procedures and standards between regions
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- Gaps in the infrastructure
 - Lack of national Conformity Assessment schemes, national bodies and Expertise
 - Poor availability of test suites (e.g. new tech)
- Inadequate priority-setting
- Lack of skills, competence and in understanding standards in the Arab and African countries
- Lack of awareness
- Lack of market surveillance and enforcement to follow up on conformity assessment effectiveness
- Lack of minimum technical requirements
- Funding
- Lack of training in new technologies and standard

A1.1.2 What strategies/actions are needed **LOCALLY** and/or **REGIONALLY**?

- Governments need to define a clear national/regional policy
- Regulators need to define the national needs and to consult stakeholders in the establishment of national CA schemes and establish milestones and time schedule
- Harmonising regulations regionally
- Identification of needs
- Mapping to available infrastructure
- Establishment of Regional Conformity Assessment and Interoperability Forums (RIF)
- Encourage participation and discussion of Governmental organizations in CA meetings
- Clear identification of requirements that the stakeholders must meet
 - Better communication of “rules” (regulations, test methods to be used, etc.)
 - Commitment from the various institutions involved
- Create discussion forums for Vendors/Regulators/labs/operators/conformity assessment & accreditation bodies/standards bodies/end-users
- Promote sharing of experiences and best practices in the region

A1.1.3 What strategies/actions/assistance are needed from international organizations?

- Information-sharing about global initiatives
- Better facilitation of partnerships and sharing of experiences
- Assist in the establishment of national CA schemes
- Improve cooperation on CA methods in the regions
- Preparation of strategies with greater participation from developing countries
 - ITU to produce harmonized protocol specifications and test specifications in a timely manner and develop ITU Recommendations “ITU Study Groups” in view of interoperability requirements for new technologies, applications and services.
 - Suggest minimum technical requirements when studying and preparing standards
- Promote knowledge and awareness of CA approaches from different vendors
- promote the ITU event in the Arab and African regions regarding the conformity assessment and the understanding of standards
- training on new technologies and standards including relevant test specifications, applications and services

ITU Pillar 2 - Interoperability

A1.2.1 What are the main obstacles that need to be overcome?

- Poor understanding of what interoperability means
 - Lack of understanding of the complexity of interoperability issues
- Costs and complexity of testing in presence of very different network scenarios/configurations
- Dealing with multiplicity of standards – no clearly defined set of minimum parameters
- Preparation of precise/accurate RFPs (Requests for Proposal)
- Lack of trust with vendors
- Bureaucracy in national organizations
- Inadequate regulatory framework
- Evolution of technology vs legacy in a regulatory environment

A1.2.2 What strategies/actions are needed LOCALLY and/or REGIONALLY?

- Identify more clearly the market needs

- Identify operators' offerings
- Identify test labs capable of promoting/hosting interoperability events
- Regulatory decisions need to be compatible with the evolution of technology
- Aim for compatible regulatory decisions within a region to minimize interoperability problems

A1.2.3 What strategies/actions/assistance are needed from international organizations?

- Support to spread interoperability culture/awareness
 - Continue holding C&I events in the regions
 - Provide expertise / capacity building activities
- ITU to define a minimum mandatory set of requirements for quality of services for ensuring interoperable services
- Suggest minimum technical requirements aimed at interoperability
- Minimize technology options when studying standards for same purpose
- Establish adequate coordination mechanisms among interested parties
- Provide tools to ensure interoperability of equipment and services for emergencies and for disaster relief;

ITU Pillar 3 – Capacity Building

A1.3.1 What are the main obstacles that need to be overcome?

- C&I is not a high priority for government
- Few opportunities to acquire expertise
- Lack of awareness of scholarships available
- Lack of opportunity to get qualified expertise and competence
- Difficulties in organizing forums - Costs, logistics, duration & hosts
- Poor availability of infrastructure/resources for “practical” training
- Lack of clear definition of the scope for conformity assessment (technical specifications and testing)
- Weakness of local Conformity Assessment infrastructures (labs, Calibration institutions)
- Availability of financial resources

A1.3.2 What strategies/actions are needed LOCALLY and/or REGIONALLY?

- Better regional cooperation between institutions to share expertise
- Participation in national, regional and international technical committees
- Academic courses on standards and CA and hands-on training with stakeholders
- Coordination of regional events on CA
- Supply Contracts should include requirements for courses to be made by vendors

A1.3.3 What strategies/actions/assistance are needed from international organizations?

- ITU to assess the type of training needed and provide the training including “hands-on” training
 - Assist the regions in holding CA regional events
- ITU should negotiate and support partnerships with regional laboratories and other institutions in a position to deliver training for specialists from the region
- Strategies to engage private companies in training activities
 - Promote Public-Private Partnerships
- Investigate and encourage long-term funding options
- ITU timely actions

- Ensure continuous learning strategies
 - Develop E-learning packages

ITU Pillar 4 - Assistance for the implementation of C&I regimes including establishing Test Centres and MRAs

A1.4.1 What are the main obstacles that need to be overcome?

- Lack of institutional arrangements for information, policy and coordination on existing regional facilities
- Government and private funding accessibility
- Reluctance to accept test results from other countries/labs
- Financial viability
 - Poor access to government and private funding
 - High cost of building a test lab (premises, human resources, accreditation, maintenance....)
- Lack of awareness and prioritization of domain (e.g., wireless, broadcasting, NGN, EMC, safety....)
- Lack of availability of competent expertise (including local language skills)
- Lack of Political/Government will
- Lack of R&D in the field of C&I having also an impact on academia

A1.4.2 What strategies/actions are needed LOCALLY and/or REGIONALLY?

- Develop clear regional and national Business Plans / Promotion / Marketing / choice of technologies
- Mapping of available services on a national or regional basis
 - Build upon existing infrastructures
 - Develop closer regional agreements
 - Create regional test centers
- Encouraging the signature of MRAs with other countries to avoid unnecessary duplication and take advantage of existing testing services
- Establishment of competitive fee structure for services public or private labs

A1.4.3 What strategies/actions/assistance are needed from international organizations?

- ITU and other partners (in cooperation with membership) need to identify policy and regulatory imperatives to accelerate the creation of C&I test centers and/or facilitate the establishment of MRAs in order to put in place the most appropriate C&I regime for each country.
 - Propose and facilitate signature of MRAs between countries based on regional framework for MRAs according to ITU guidelines on C&I.
 - Continue procuring MRAs
- ITU in cooperation with other international organizations (e.g. UNIDO) and other partners (e.g. CPqD, CERT, SINTESIO, etc.) to support development/strengthening of calibration and ICT test labs
- Assist in the implementation of existing guidelines based on best practice
- Assist with feasibility studies on determining needs for the test centres
- ITU participate in the process of promoting regional test centres