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| **33RD MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE PREPARATORY WORKING GROUP**20-24 August, 2018Washington, D.C., United States of America | **OEA/Ser.L/XVII.7****GT-PC/doc. 745/18****24 August 2018****Original:** |
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|  | **DRAFT RESOLUTION****INVOLVING NEW ACTORS IN BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE** |  |
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**Draft Resolution**

**Involving new actors in bridging the digital divide**

Recalling

*a*) That Article 1 of the ITU Constitution states that the purpose of the Union shall be to:

* to promote the extension of the benefits of the new telecommunication technologies to all the world’s inhabitants;
* promote the development of social projects aimed at extending telecommunication services to the most isolated areas in countries; and
* promote the development of technical facilities and their most efficient operation with a view to improving the efficiency of telecommunication services, increasing their usefulness and making them, so far as possible, generally available to the public;

*Considering*

*b)* Resolution 200 (Rev. Busan 2014) of the Plenipotentiary Conference on the "Connect 2020 Agenda for Global Telecommunication/Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Development", especially target 2 on "Bridging the digital divide and providing broadband for all";

*c)* Resolution 139 (Rev. Busan 2014) of the Plenipotentiary Conference on "the use of telecommunication/information and communication technologies to bridge the digital divide and build an inclusive information society";

*d)* Resolution 11 (Rev. Buenos Aires 2017) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) on "Telecommunication/information and communication technology services in rural, isolated and poorly served areas and indigenous communities",

*e*) Resolution 37 (Rev. Buenos Aires 2017) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) on "Bridging the Digital Divide";

*further considering*

*a*) Recommendation ITU-D 19 (Rev. Buenos Aires 2017) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC), which states:

- that it is important to consider small operators and non-profit operators as community-based, through appropriate regulatory measures that allow them to access essential infrastructure on fair terms in order to provide broadband connectivity to users in rural and remote areas, taking advantage of technological advances;

- that it is also important that administrations, in their radio spectrum planning and licensing activities, consider mechanisms to facilitate the deployment of broadband services in rural and remote areas through small non-profit operators,

- that business models that can achieve operational and financial sustainability can be operated by local entrepreneurs supported by a variety of initiatives and that these facilities, where feasible, could be supported by Universal Service Funds, as an essential component of rural communications;

*c*) Recommendation ITU-D 20 (Rev. Buenos Aires 2017) on "Policy and regulatory initiatives for developing telecommunications/ICTs/broadband in rural and remote areas."

*Highlighting*

*a***)** that the Declaration of Principles of the 2004 World Summit on the Information Society recognizes the common commitment to building an inclusive Information Society for sustainable development and improving quality of life for all, noting that connectivity is an indispensable enabling factor and that universal, ubiquitous, equitable and affordable access to ICT infrastructure and services is one of its major challenges, and that if they are properly developed, adapted to regional, national and local conditions, easily accessible and affordable, using broadband and innovative technologies, it is possible to accelerate the economic and social progress of countries, as well as the well-being of all individuals, communities and peoples;

*b*) that Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 9 presented at the 2015 United Nations General Assembly Conference on Sustainable Development state in their targets 1.4 and 9.c that:

 • 1.4: By 2030, it must be ensured that all men and women, particularly the poor and vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services and appropriate new technologies, among others;

• 9.c: Access to information and communication technology should be significantly increased and efforts should be made to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in the least developed countries by 2020;

*e*) that, during the World Summit on the Information Society Forum held in Geneva from 19 to 23 March 2018, it was recognized that community networks operate through the participation of local communities in the design, development, deployment and management of shared infrastructure as a common, community-owned and democratically operated resource, shown to be viable, affordable and sustainable solutions to reduce the digital divide;

Recognizing

*a)* That the Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 6 July 2017 entitled "Assessment of progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society" concluded, inter alia, that:

- about four billion people remain disconnected from the Internet and more than one billion have no access to basic telephone services;

- it is unlikely that most people in rural and economically disadvantaged areas will receive the benefits of connectivity in the short term;

- traditional models of Internet access have failed to provide coverage to rural communities and marginalized areas, which account for nearly 60% of the world's population;

b) there is a need to find new alternatives that can solve in the short term the lack of connectivity and telecommunication/ICT services in areas where they are not available or affordable;

c) in some Member States, small operators, non-profit operators and community operators are new actors that have emerged in different regions, as innovative alternative solutions to reduce the digital divide, addressing communication needs in rural and remote or underserved areas where telecommunication/ICT services were unavailable or unaffordable;

d) it is necessary to study a variety of regulatory models that would allow small operators, non-profit operators and community operators to deploy the telecommunications infrastructure needed to provide broadband connectivity to users in rural and remote areas;

*f*) these new actors require an adequate regulatory and public policy framework to facilitate their existence and development that will allow them to support the reduction of the digital divide and to achieve the targets established in the Sustainable Development Goals;

resolves

1 To encourage the participation of small operators, non-profit operators and community operators as new actors proposing alternative solutions to bridge the digital divide in countries with underserved areas where investment and coverage is unplanned or unprofitable for other businesses, particularly in developing countries, to provide coverage to rural and isolated areas lacking this service, as well as indigenous communities.

2 To study the experience that Member States have had with the existence of small operators, non-profit operators and community operators, in order to identify trends and best practices in the implementation of regulatory elements, public policies, and spectrum planning and allocation necessary to facilitate the existence and development of these new actors.

 *instructs the Secretary-General*

1 to take the necessary actions to comply with this resolution;

 *instructs the Council*

1 to analyse means of implementation for compliance with this Resolution and, if necessary and within available resources, to identify funds or forms of financing.

2 to report to the next Plenipotentiary Conference on the implementation of this Resolution.

 *instructs the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau*

1 to promote the dissemination of information, training and exchange of best practices on the variety of approaches to reducing the digital divide, including experiences of Member States regarding the existence of small operators, non-profit operators and community operators in Member States as an alternative to reducing the digital divide.

2 to support and collaborate with the Member States that require it in specific recommendations on regulatory frameworks and public policies to enable the existence and development of these new actors.

3 to implement pilot projects in Member States, at their request, in accordance with the resources available to the ITU, relating to aspects involving the deployment of telecommunication infrastructure and the provision of telecommunication services by small operators, non-profit operators and community operators in underserved rural areas or areas with unmet needs mentioned in this Resolution;

 *instructs the Director of the Radiocommunication Bureau*

1. to promote studies of spectrum management models related to this resolution, which will enable and facilitate compliance and enforcement by administrations.

 *invites Member States*

1 to collaborate in the implementation of this Resolution.