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|  | **PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION 139** **USE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS/INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES TO BRIDGE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE AND CREATE AN INCLUSIVE INFORMATION SOCIETY** |  |
|  | **(Agenda Item: 5.6)** |  |
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RESOLUTION 139 (Rev. DUBAI, 2018)

**Use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies to bridge the digital divide and create an inclusive information society**

The International Telecommunication Union Plenipotentiary Conference (Rev. Dubai, 2018),

noting

a) Resolution 16 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of the WTDC on special actions and measures for the least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing states (SIDS), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and countries with economies in transition;

b) Resolution 37 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of the WTDC on bridging the digital divide;

c) Resolution 44 (Rev. Hammamet, 2016) of the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly on bridging the standardization gap between developing and developed countries;

d) Recommendation ITU-T D.53 on international aspects of universal service;

e) Resolution 23 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) on Internet access and its availability in developing countries and pricing principles for international Internet connection;

recognizing

1. that the use of ICTs enhances social, economic, cultural and environmental growth, contributes to sustainable development, and offers new opportunities for developed and developing countries to take advantage of the benefits offered by new technologies;
2. that it is necessary to generate digitally accessible services in developing countries,[[1]](#footnote-2)1 harnessing the benefits of the information and communication technology (ICT) revolution;
3. that the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) stressed that ICT infrastructure is a fundamental element of an inclusive information society, and called for a commitment by all States to make ICTs and their applications work for development;
4. that the WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS beyond 2015 reaffirms that the goal of the Summit is to reduce the digital, technological and knowledge divide and to create a people-centered, inclusive, open and development-oriented Information Society, in which everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge;
5. that the United Nations General Assembly Res. 70/125 on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society recognizes that speed, stability, affordability, language, local content, and accessibility for persons with disabilities are now basic elements of quality, and that high-speed broadband connectivity is already a factor in facilitating sustainable development.

considering

1. that, despite the above-mentioned progress and the improvement noted in some areas, the costs of access to ICTs and their applications in many developing countries remain beyond the reach of most people, particularly those living in rural or remote areas;
2. that LDCs, SIDS, LLDCs and countries with economies in transition continue to face specific challenges in reducing the digital divide and would benefit from special measures for the development of telecommunications/ICTs and for improving their connectivity;
3. that it is necessary to study and analyse the social, demographic, economic and technological context of the communities where it is necessary to deploy telecommunication/ICT infrastructure and to implement training plans;
4. that the implementation of policies to promote access to telecommunication/ICT services in rural, isolated and underserved areas has proved to be a crucial tool in bridging the digital divide;
5. that there are different models that may be financially viable in underserved areas or areas with unmet needs, including those supported by public, private and public-private programs such as these;
6. that the deployment of fixed and mobile broadband is necessary for the digital inclusion of the entire population, and in particular those with the fewest resources;
7. that small and medium-sized service providers can play an important role in the deployment of broadband networks, especially in rural and remote areas, and that incentives to establish a pluralistic ecosystem are beneficial and contribute to the affordability of the service to communities;
8. that strategies aimed at reducing costs for users of telecommunication/ICT services to achieve affordability continue to be necessary,

also considering

1. that telecommunication/ICT facilities, services and applications are not merely a consequence of economic development, but an essential requirement of social, cultural and environmental development, including economic growth;
2. that telecommunications/ICTs and ICT applications are an integral part of regional, national and international development processes;
3. that an enabling environment, consisting of the policies, skills and technical capabilities needed to use and develop technologies, is now considered to be as important as investment in telecommunication/ICT infrastructure;
4. that recent developments, and in particular the convergence of telecommunication, information, broadcasting and informatics services and technologies, in some countries are factors of change in the information and knowledge age;
5. that most developing countries are in constant need of investment in different development sectors, with priority given to investment in the telecommunication/ICT sector, given the urgent need for telecommunication/ICT as a basis for growth and development in other sectors;
6. that there is still a need to provide policy makers with relevant and timely information on the overall role and contribution of ICTs and their applications in overall development planning;
7. that studies carried out at the initiative of the Union to assess the benefits of telecommunications/ICTs and ICT applications in the sector have had a positive impact on other sectors and are a necessary condition for their development;
8. that the use of satellite and terrestrial radiocommunication systems to enable access to local communities located in rural or remote areas without increasing connection costs due to distance or other geographical features should be considered a very useful tool to reduce the digital divide;
9. that the participation of local communities in the development, design, deployment and management of shared infrastructure has proven to be a viable, affordable and sustainable solution to reduce the digital divide in some cases, as noted at the World Summit on the Information Society Forum 2018;
10. that satellite broadband services provide high-connectivity, fast and reliable communications solutions at efficient costs in metropolitan, rural and remote areas, and are a key driver for the economic and social development of countries and regions;
11. that the development of low-cost equipment has led to the creation of last-mile networks by small operators, non-profit operators and communities in regions considered economically unviable for private operators;
12. that there are cases where Universal Service Funds are not accountable and that, according to the 2013 ITU report "Universal Service Fund and Digital Inclusion for All Study", there is a persistent problem of "weak or ambiguous definitions of what the funds can address, resulting in constrained approaches to project identification and allocation";

*emphasizing*

1. the important role that telecommunications/ICTs and ICT applications have played in development in the fields of e-government, employment, agriculture, health, education, transport, industry, human rights, environmental protection, trade and information transfer for social welfare, among others, and also as a factor of overall economic and social progress in developing countries and especially for people living in rural and remote areas;
2. the indispensable role of telecommunication/ICT infrastructure and ICT applications in achieving the goal of digital inclusion and enabling sustainable, widespread and affordable access to information,

bearing in mind

1. that many Member States have employed a wide range of strategies to facilitate access to and use of telecommunication/ICT services, which helps to bridge the digital divide at a national level;
2. that regulatory initiatives on issues such as telecommunication/ICT infrastructure development and spectrum management, elimination/reduction of additional roaming charges for end-users, the use of universal service funds, the participation of small non-profit community operators, among others, subject to the applicability of the regulations and telecommunications policies of each State, have been successfully implemented to facilitate access to and use of telecommunication/ICT services, contributing to reducing the digital divide;
3. that strategies and programs have been developed in various ITU Member States to encourage and foment investment in the implementation of telecommunication/ICT infrastructure deployment projects, focusing in particular on transport networks that provide the economic conditions for the development of new access networks in areas with unmet needs, especially by small and medium-sized service providers, making them more affordable.

appreciating

1. the various studies that have been carried out in the framework of the ITU's technical cooperation and assistance activities;

b) that the ITU, in accordance with its functions and mandate, is helping to bridge the national, regional and international digital divide in ICTs and their applications, facilitating interoperability, interconnection and global connectivity of telecommunication networks and services, for the follow-up and achievement of the relevant WSIS goals and objectives;

resolves

* 1. to continue to monitor the implementation of 37 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017);
	2. that the Union should continue to organize, conduct or sponsor the necessary studies to highlight the contribution of ICTs and their applications to development in general, in a different and changing context;
	3. that the Union should continue to act as a mechanism for the exchange of information and knowledge in this regard, within the framework of the implementation of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action 2017 and in collaboration with other relevant organizations, and to implement initiatives, programs and projects aimed at facilitating access to telecommunications/ICTs and their applications;
	4. that the ITU, in cooperation with relevant organizations, should continue to develop appropriate ICT benchmarking indicators for measuring the digital divide, collect statistical data, measure the impact of ICTs and provide comparative analyses of digital inclusion, which will remain essential for fostering economic growth;

5 that the ITU should continue to support the efforts of Member States to strengthen their regulatory and public policy frameworks, as well as the implementation of projects that facilitate new mechanisms to address remote or underserved areas involving the participation of new local actors such as small operators, non-profit operators and communities;

invites

administrations and governments of Member States, United Nations agencies and organizations, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, regional telecommunication organizations, financial institutions and providers of telecommunication and ICT equipment and services to increase their participation for the successful implementation of this resolution,

encourages

all development aid and assistance agencies, including the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the UNDP and regional and national development funds, as well as ITU donor and recipient Member States, to continue to recognize the importance of ICTs in the development process and to give high priority to the allocation of resources to this sector,

instructs the Secretary-General

* 1. when implementing this Resolution, to bring it to the attention of all stakeholders, in particular the UNDP, the IBRD, regional funds and national development cooperation funds;
	2. to report annually to the ITU Council on progress in the implementation of this Resolution;
	3. to take the necessary steps to ensure that the results of the activities carried out in accordance with this resolution are widely disseminated,

instructs the director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau in coordination, as appropriate, with the directors of the other bureaux

1 to continue to assist Member States and Sector Members in developing a development-friendly policy and regulatory framework for ICTs and their applications;

2 to continue to assist Member States and Sector Members with strategies to facilitate access to telecommunication/ICT infrastructure, in particular in rural or remote areas, including small and medium-sized service providers;

3 to assess models of affordable and sustainable systems for rural and remote access to information, communications and ICT applications in the global network, based on the study of these models;

4 to encourage the study of best practices in the accountability and governance of universal service funds, where appropriate, as well as the analysis of other mechanisms to encourage investment in telecommunication infrastructure in areas that are unprofitable for the private sector;

5 to continue to carry out, within the available resources, telecommunication and ICT case studies in rural and remote areas and to implement, where appropriate, pilot models based on innovative solutions to expand rural access in response to *resolves* 5;

6 to promote and facilitate collaborative efforts between the different sectors of the ITU, for carrying out the studies, projects and interrelated activities identified in the sectors' action plans;

7 to continue to assist Member States by providing them with a database of experts in the necessary fields and to finance further activities necessary to bridge the digital divide in developing countries, subject to the resources allocated by the Financial Plan;

8 to strengthen cooperation and coordination with relevant regional and international organizations, especially those of developing countries, in activities related to bridging the digital divide;

9 to collect and disseminate best practices and regulatory experiences on national and regional strategies implemented to promote investment in the implementation of telecommunication/ICT services, increase access and promote affordable services for consumers;

instructs the director of the Radiocommunication Bureau

that, in coordination with the director of the BDT, actions be implemented to support studies and projects and, in turn, promote joint training activities aimed at an increasingly efficient use of orbit and spectrum resources, with a view to expanding affordable access to satellite broadband and facilitating network connectivity and connectivity between different areas, countries and regions, especially in developing countries, and to disseminating information on new agile and efficient tools for the administration and management of radio spectrum to enable access to these radio resources;

instructs the Council

1 to allocate adequate resources for the implementation of this resolution, within the approved budgetary resources;

2 to examine the reports of the Secretary-General and to take appropriate action to ensure the effective implementation of this resolution;

3 to submit to the next Plenipotentiary Conference a progress report on the implementation of this resolution,

invites Member States

1 to continue to act in concert to achieve the objectives of WTDC Resolution 37 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017);

2 to consult with the beneficiaries of plans, programs and investment in telecommunication/ICT infrastructure, taking into account differences in social conditions and population dynamics, in order to ensure the appropriate use of ICTs;

3 to encourage the implementation of policies to promote public, private and public-private investment, as well as the participation of communities and small operators in the development and construction of radiocommunication systems, including satellite systems, in their countries and regions, and to consider including their use in broadband plans, as a tool to help reduce the digital divide and meet telecommunication needs, especially in developing countries;

4 to develop transparency and accountability measures and an overall strategy and objectives to ensure that universal service funds are used for their intended purpose and to achieve the desired levels of oversight and governance, where appropriate;

5 to implement and develop policies that allow greater and better access to telecommunication/ICT services, such as encouraging the adoption and deployment of new technologies, the implementation of regulatory policies that favor the deployment of telecommunication/ICT infrastructure and that also allow for a more efficient use of radio resources.

1. 1 This term includes least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)