

WTDC 2014: ITU World Telecommunication Development Conference

Background Information

The Final Report of the 2010 WTDC is available for purchase or download from the ITU website:

<http://www.itu.int/pub/D-TDC-WTDC-2010>

Summary

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU or the Union) is a Specialized Agency of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland that has been operating since 1865. In 2014 the ITU will hold a conference focused entirely on development, as it does every four years. This is not a treaty conference; rather, the WTDC is a Sector Conference that sets out the Membership's strategic vision and plans for the ITU's work in the field of telecommunications development.

Background: The structure of the International Telecommunication Union

The International Telecommunication Union is the United Nations Specialized Agency for information and communication technologies. It has responsibilities for allocating global radio spectrum and satellite orbital slots, developing the technical standards that ensure networks and telecommunication technologies seamlessly interconnect, and to improve access to telecommunications and information and communication technologies (ICTs) for underserved communities worldwide. There are three Sectors of the ITU: the Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R), the Standardization Sector (ITU-T), and the Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D).

Each Sector of the ITU holds a World Conference every four years to review its objectives and priorities and to define its work for the following four years. The World Conferences develop specific Resolutions and agreements that pertain to their Sectors and feed into the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (or Plenipot).

A Plenipotentiary Conference takes place every four years to revise the ITU Constitution and Convention (the basic treaty instruments of the Union); set the Union's general policies; adopt four-year strategic and financial plans; produce Decisions and Resolutions; and to hold elections for the ITU's Senior Officials, the Member State members of ITU Council, and the members of the Radio Regulations Board.

The ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D)

The mission of the Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) is to:

- foster international cooperation to develop and improve telecommunication/ICT networks in developing countries;
- address priority development concerns of ITU members; and,
- manage ITU-D activities.

The ITU-D is a complex organization. A Director, elected by the Plenipotentiary Conference every four years, is the head of the Development Sector Bureau or BDT. The BDT has support and substantive

staff at ITU headquarters in Geneva, and Secretariat staff distributed across five main regional offices with eight sub-regional offices located in regions around the world. ITU-D has dual responsibility as a United Nations specialized agency for implementing projects under the United Nations development system, and also under the ITU umbrella focusing on its development work program.

The BDT Secretariat acts as the executing agency to implement projects and programmes that are defined by the ITU membership at the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC). The BDT also provides expert assistance to the ITU-D's two Study Groups. The BDT and its regional offices work in partnership with other government agencies, the United Nations, ITU Sector Members, and other partners in order to fund and implement development programmes and projects.

What is the ITU World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC)?

The sixth World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-14) is scheduled to take place from 31 March to 11 April 2014. The Conference is charged with identifying priorities for the ITU's development activities promoting telecommunications and information and communication technologies (ICTs), taking into account contributions made by Member States and Sector Members. The Conference will adopt an action plan determining the activities and focus of the ITU-D work over the next four-year period.

What is the Preparatory Process for the WTDC?

The ITU holds a series of preparatory meetings in the run-up to the WTDC, including a series of Regional Preparatory Meetings (called RPMs). Six are taking place in 2013:

- RPM for CIS Countries (18-21 February 2013)
- RPM for Asia-Pacific (29 April - 2 May 2013)
- RPM for the Americas (19-22 August 2013)
- RPM for Africa (1-4 October 2013)
- RPM for the Arab Region (28-31 October 2013)
- RPM for Europe (25-28 November 2013)

These regional preparatory meetings bring together ITU Member States, Sector Members, and other invited experts to consider regional ITU contributions, which become the basis for regional initiatives at the WTDC. Each RPM produces a Chairman's Report that reviews ITU-D activities in the region since the last WTDC (2010), summarizes Membership proposals, identifies regional priority areas, and provides an Annex that contains the agreed Regional Initiatives.

The reports from the RPMs are brought together in a meeting of the six Chairs of the RPMs, who consolidate the inputs as the draft Declaration and Action Plan, which is a baseline for discussion at the WTDC itself. Additionally, the WTDC will consider inputs from other regional organizations, Member States and Sector Members.

What are the outputs from the WTDC?

Ultimately the Conference will produce several outputs in the form of a Declaration, an Action Plan and the Development Sector's contribution to the ITU Strategic Plan to be ratified at the Plenipotentiary Conference later in 2014. The final report from the WTDC will define what the ITU-D will try to achieve between 2014 and the next WTDC in 2018. The WTDC also will agree to:

- align the ITU-D's work with that of the Union more broadly, and with the direction provided by the World Summit on the Information Society;
- define the objectives of the Development Sector;
- adopt a series of global programmes and regional initiatives to support the objectives;
- adopt new and revised questions that will be taken up in the two ITU-D Study Groups;
- appoint the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Study Groups;
- agree to Resolutions that relate to specific substantive issues, and strategic organizational issues.
- establish guidelines for ITU-D coordination and working methods; and
- appoint the members and define the mandate of the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG).

How is the ITU-D organized?

The outputs of the WTDC reflect the complexity of the Sector as they attempt to balance a tightly integrated and coordinated work plan with the inevitable diversity in priorities among ITU Members and among the five ITU regions. The Final Report of the WTDC 2010 includes the Hyderabad Declaration, the Hyderabad Action Plan, and detailed Appendices. The 2010 report shows the relationship among the Sector's Objectives, Programmes, Regional Initiatives, and the work of the two ITU-D Study Groups. The relationship can be summarized as follows.

Objectives

There are six overarching Objectives for the ITU-D, which align closely with the five Programmes approved by the WTDC. The Objectives and their related "outputs" provide the Member States and the BDT Secretariat considerable freedom in how they define the Programmes.

Programmes

WTDC-10 established five Programmes for the sector that specifically describe the global priorities for the ITU-D and the areas of work for the Sector during the four years between Conferences.

Regional Initiatives

Each Regional Preparatory Meeting identifies the regional priorities for the ITU-D and, naturally, there is often considerable diversity among the regions. It is, therefore, useful to map the regional initiatives against the Programmes (see Annex 1). For example, there is strong cross-regional interest in technical assistance for developing digital broadcast and broadband, capacity building and digital inclusion, and in emergency telecommunications. In contrast, there has been less demand for regional programmes in some of the other areas, such as cybersecurity and "equitable access to critical Internet resources."

Study Groups and Questions

Like the other two ITU Sectors (ITU-R and ITU-T), some of the work of the Development Sector is done in Study Groups. There are two ITU-D Study Groups whose work-plan is outlined in broad terms by the WTDC and agreed in more detail by the Study Group Chairs and management team. The mandates of the Study Groups are intended to align with and support the Objectives, Programmes and Regional Initiatives decided by the ITU membership, but may also bring in other unrelated work.

Unlike the Regional Initiatives, the Study Group work is largely done at ITU headquarters in Geneva, with only a few meetings held in the Regions. Each question has sub-topics that are managed by Rapporteurs. Rapporteurs are chosen during the first study group meeting after the WTDC.

WTDC-2010 approved two study groups:

Study Group 1 is mandated to address issues related to the enabling environment, cybersecurity, ICT applications and Internet-related issues, concentrating in nine specific Questions.

Study Group 2 is mandated to address issues related to information and communication infrastructure and technology development, emergency telecommunications and climate-change adaptation, also divided into nine Questions. Questions are discussed by subgroups within a Study Group that focus on specific topics.

The names of the Study Groups represent an evolution from previous mandates for the two groups. Until 2010 Study Group 1 had been named “Telecommunication development strategies and policies”, and Study Group 2 was named “Development and management of telecommunication services and networks and ICT applications”. The changes partially reflect the WTDC’s intention to align its work with the 2005 WSIS outcomes, and in part to reflect changes in telecommunication technologies, the importance of the Internet, and the membership’s shifting priorities.

Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG)

The Telecommunication Development Advisory Group meets annually between the World Telecommunication Development Conferences and advises the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) on the implementation of the WTDC Action Plan, including issues relating to the budget and the operational plan of the ITU-D. Member States, Sector Members, chairmen and vice-chairmen of Study Groups and invited development experts may participate in the TDAG meetings.

The TDAG establishes working guidelines, facilitates cross-regional communications, and oversees the functioning of the Study Groups. In this latter role, the TDAG is empowered to redefine or delete Study Group Questions, to restructure the Study Groups, and to determine the priority, financing, and urgency of the work on the Questions.

Why is the WTDC Important?

The Internet Society believes that the ITU-D has important work to do in order to assist developing countries to bridge the digital divide and bring much-needed infrastructure to all parts of the globe. Therefore, we believe it is important to be aware of and to be involved in the preparations for the upcoming World Telecommunications Development Conference, and at the WTDC itself. To be successful in its mission and to work within limited resources, we believe that the ITU-D must work collaboratively and in partnership with other stakeholders in this field.

Unlike the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, the WTDC does not result in an international treaty that is legally binding on Member States. Nonetheless, given that the WTDC takes place in the same year as the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, the outcomes of the WTDC often have significant influence on future negotiations.

In significant ways, the three Sectors of the ITU and their respective World Conferences influence and reinforce one another. As with the non-treaty World Telecommunication Standardization Conference and the treaty-producing World Radiocommunication Conference, the WTDC is a platform for the ITU Member States to air their views on issues, to develop positions and alliances on the strategic direction of the ITU, and to condition proposals that later will form the basis for debate and decisions in the all-important Plenipotentiary Conference and the role of the ITU itself over the next four years.

For example, in the 2010 WTDC, the members decided the ITU-D work should support the WSIS outcomes; thus, at the same time the Action Plan reflects the increasing discussion of Internet-related issues. This can be seen by the emergence of “Internet-related issues” as a focus for Study Group 1, in the development of Questions addressing IP telecommunication services, cybersecurity, “fair and equitable access to Critical Internet Resources,” and Internet access costs as priorities in the Sector’s Programs, and in the creation of Programme 2 on cybersecurity and critical Internet resources. Each of these issues reappeared as politically charged issues during the 2010 Plenipotentiary Conference, and we expect the same trend to continue in 2014. Some consider the WTDC as a key preparatory meeting for the Plenipot.

Internet Society Perspectives

Again in 2014, the WTDC will take place seven months before the Plenipotentiary Conference. As a Sector Member of the ITU-D, the Internet Society will be participating in the preparatory process, and in the WTDC, to provide the Internet Society’s perspective on the progress the ITU has made in advancing connectivity since the last WTDC in 2010 and to highlight challenges where more work may be needed. The Internet Society will advance its perspective that the ITU-D has important work to do in order to assist developing countries to bridge the digital divide and bring much-needed infrastructure to all parts of the globe.

It has been the Internet Society’s experience that, in order to reach our shared goals for development and access to communications, collaboration and cooperation through partnerships are essential. Furthermore, partnerships, policies and approaches that are sustainable and effective must take into account the vital expertise and focus of different stakeholders and organizations, avoiding duplication of efforts where possible. The ITU-D has an important role to play within this complex development ecosystem. To successfully carry out its role, the ITU-D as a global organization and in collaboration with its regional offices should look increasingly to partnerships and opportunities at global, regional and local level for cooperation.

Annex 1: Alignment among ITU-D Objectives, Programmes, Regional Initiatives and Study Groups

Objectives ¹	Programmes ² and Study Groups ³	Regional Initiatives Planned ⁴	Related initiatives
To foster international cooperation, among ITU-D members and other stakeholders, on telecommunication/ICT development issues, by providing the pre-eminent forum for discussion, information sharing and consensus building on telecommunication/ICT technical and policy issues.	Overarching objective: no specific programmes	Overarching objective: no specific Regional Initiatives	
To assist the membership in maximizing the utilization of appropriate new technologies, including broadband, in developing their	Programme 1: Information and communications infrastructure and technology development Study Group 1	Africa (7.3.1) Americas (7.3.2) Arab States (7.3.3) Asia-Pacific (7.3.4) CIS (7.3.5)	Africa (7.3.1) Implementation of Connect Africa Summit

¹ Objectives are set out in Section 6.5 of the WTDC 2010 Final Report, p. 22 <<http://www.itu.int/pub/D-TDC-WTDC-2010>>

² Programmes are detailed in Section 6.7 of the WTDC 2010 Final Report, pp. 39-40 <<http://www.itu.int/pub/D-TDC-WTDC-2010>>

³ Study Groups and their associated Questions are detailed in Section 4 of the WTDC 2010 Final Report, pp. 34-35 <<http://www.itu.int/pub/D-TDC-WTDC-2010>>

⁴ Regional Initiatives are detailed in Section 7 of the WTDC 2010 Final Report, pp. 40-42 <<http://www.itu.int/pub/D-TDC-WTDC-2010>>. The numbers following the regions' names refer to the section of the Report.

Objectives ¹	Programmes ² and Study Groups ³	Regional Initiatives Planned ⁴	Related initiatives
telecommunication/ICT infrastructures and services and in designing and deploying resilient telecommunication/ICT network infrastructures.	Study Group 2	Europe (7.3.6)	
To foster the development of strategies to enhance the deployment, security and safe and affordable use of ICT applications and services towards mainstreaming telecommunications/ICTs in the broader economy and society.	Programme 2: Cybersecurity, ICT applications and IP network-related issues Study Group 1 Study Group 2	Africa (7.3.1) Arab States (7.3.3) Europe (7.3.6)	Americas (emphasis placed on development of Internet Exchange Points [IXPs]) Note also Resolution 63: IP address allocation and encouraging the deployment of IPv6 in the developing countries
To assist the membership in creating and maintaining an enabling policy and regulatory environment, including the establishment and implementation of sustainable national policies, strategies and plans, through sharing best	Programme 3: Enabling environment Study Group 1	Africa (7.3.1) Americas (7.3.2) Asia-Pacific (7.3.4)	Arab States (7.3.3) Arabic digital content

Objectives ¹	Programmes ² and Study Groups ³	Regional Initiatives Planned ⁴	Related initiatives
<p>practices and collecting and disseminating statistical information on telecommunication/ICT developments.</p>			
<p>To build human and institutional capacity in order to improve skills in the development and use of telecommunication/ICT networks and applications, and to foster digital inclusion for people with special needs, such as persons with disabilities, through awareness-raising, training activities, sharing information and know-how and the production and distribution of relevant publications.</p>	<p>Programme 4: Capacity building and digital inclusion</p> <p>Study Group 1</p>	<p>Africa (7.3.1) Americas (7.3.2) Europe (7.3.5)</p>	<p>CIS (7.3.5) Groundwork for the setting-up and holding of electronic meetings; Establishment of an ITU virtual laboratory for the remote testing of equipment and of new technologies and services, in the interests of achieving the aims of Resolution 76 (Johannesburg, 2008) of WTSA-08 and populating a unified ITU database; Provision of a stable electric power supply for telecommunication/ICT facilities in rural and remote areas; Development of recommendations and creation of a pilot segment of</p>

Objectives ¹	Programmes ² and Study Groups ³	Regional Initiatives Planned ⁴	Related initiatives
			a telecommunication/ICT system to support secure remote retail payments and the management of bank accounts using wireless communication networks.
<p>To provide concentrated and special assistance to least developed countries (LDCs) and countries in special need, and to assist ITU Member States in responding to climate change and integrating telecommunications/ICTs in disaster management.</p>	<p>Programme 5: Least developed countries, countries in special need, emergency telecommunications and climate-change adaptation</p> <p>Study Group 2</p>	<p>Americas (7.3.2) Asia-Pacific (7.3.4)</p>	