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| **Keywords:** | JCA-AHF; accessibility; report |
| **Abstract:** | This document provides the draft report of joint JCA-AHF and ITU-T Q26/16 meeting (virtual, 1 July 2020). |

Related links

* [JCA-AHF webpage](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Pages/default.aspx)
* [Meeting documents page](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Pages/202007-docs.aspx)

1. Opening of the meeting

The joint JCA-AHF and ITU-T Q26/16 e-meeting was held on 1 July 2020 chaired by Ms Andrea Saks (USA), JCA-AHF Chairman. This meeting was collocated with Q26/16 meeting (29 June - 1 July 2020) during SG16 meeting (26 June – 3 July 2020) which was held also virtually. Ms Lidia Best, co-vice chairman of JCA-AHF, from G3ict and UK National Association of Deafened People (NADP), took role of the remote moderator by reading texts in Chat Box of the remote participation tool. The first half of the meeting was devoted to finalizing the planned Q26/16 work. This document provides the summary of only the JCA-AHF part of the meeting. The list of participants is available on JCA-AHF [Document 407](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Documents/docs-2020/July%202020%20meeting/JCA-AHF-Doc407_participants%20list.docx).

1. Approval of the agenda

The Chairman introduced the draft JCA-AHF meeting agenda and document allocation as contained in JCA-AHF [Document 400](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Documents/docs-2020/July%202020%20meeting/JCA-AHF-Doc%20400-agenda.docx). It was approved without substantive changes.

1. Approval of the last JCA-AHF meeting report

The Chairman introduced the last JCA-AHF meeting (21 May 2020) report (JCA-AHF [Document 399](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Documents/docs-2020/May%202020%20meeting/JCA-AHF-Doc399.docx)), and it was approved by the JCA-AHF.

1. Comments by Ms Amela Odobasic, Rapporteur of ITU-D Q7/1

The Chairman introduced Ms Amela Odobasic, Rapporteur of [ITU-D Q7/1](https://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/CDS/sg/rgqlist.asp?lg=1&sp=2018&rgq=D18-SG01-RGQ07.1&stg=1) *“*Access to telecommunication/ICT services by persons with disabilities and other persons with specific needs*”*. Ms Odobasic appreciated Ms Lidia Best for her presentation at the Webinar organized by ITU-D Q7/1 on [Digital accessibility during COVID 19](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Study-Groups/2018-2021/Pages/meetings/webinar-Q7-1-june24.aspx) (24 June 2020). Then Ms Odobasic emphasized the need to strengthen the cooperation between ITU sectors especially JCA-AHF and ITU-D Q7/1 in implementing the current mandate and also in planning of the next mandate of ITU-D Q7/1. To this end, she invited members to participate in and to submit written contribution to ITU-D Q7/1 meeting which will take place on 1st and 2nd of October 2020, and she also suggested to have a joint meeting. The JCA-AHF Chairman promised to contribute to the ITU-D Q7/1 report and will follow-up on the suggested joint meeting.

1. Accessibility during the Covid-19 crisis

## Impact of the pandemic on deaf people who have vision issues

Mr Ben Fletcher who is a deafblind person and who work as Principal Engineer at Financial Times (FT), London, presented the JCA-AHF Document 405 on Impact of the pandemic on deaf people who have vision issues. There are a number of different issues that affect the sight of deaf people, which makes it challenging to communicate via sign language: According to Swedish research, affected persons represent one in six of the total of deaf people; Usher syndrome is a major cause of deaf-blindness, resulting in Retinitis Pigmentosa and hearing loss; There are also people who are not particularly skilled in using sign language. Especially in the pandemic situation where physical meetings shifted into online ones, those people are experiencing quality deterioration in receiving information, as there are no guidelines in such situation while many organizations are currently working on it. Mr Fletcher took an initiative to develop such guidelines which include issues related to clothing, background, lighting, camera setup, and signing style. The draft document would be available in Mid-July, and Mr Fletcher hopes the document would become a formal one such as a standard in the future.

Ms Best has raised an issue faced by those who make use of lip read during the pandemic, and Mr Fletcher agreed the issue was similar to that faced by deafblind people, and he commented that he would potentially include them in the guidelines.

Mr David Fourney from G3ict expressed his wish to get Mr Fletcher’s thoughts to improve the current joint ISO/IEC JTC1 SC35 and ITU work on sign language. Then, Mr Fourney asked if the issues related to right-handed and left-handed for sign language was considered in the guideline. Mr Fletcher explained that rather finger spelling speed and switch from 3D to 2D format have been discussed, instead of talking about left-handed and right-handed.

Mr Christopher Jones expressed his wish via chat box that Mr Fletcher’s guideline could be included in ITU-T Technical Paper [FSTP-ACC-RemPart (2015)](https://www.itu.int/pub/T-TUT-FSTP-2015-ACC) – “Guidelines for supporting remote participation in meetings for all”.

## Lessons learned from remote meetings forced by the Covid-19 crisis

The JCA-AHF Chairman expressed her impression about the situation of UK. Mr Andy Heath wrote that only the Scotland and the Welsh Governments that made sure that the sign language interpreters were physically in the room with them.

Mr Fourney explained the situation in Canada, where all discussion on the public health related to the Covid-19 had interpretation of both American Sign Language and Quebec Sign Language. But other areas of communication did not include SLI, which should be improved.

Mr Matjaž Debevc from the University of Maribor wrote that in Slovenia many government briefings were not accessible for hard of hearing people. Live SLI was available, but no live captioning due to the politics of the public broadcaster in financing. Captioning was only available after a couple of hours in archived files.

## Accessibility for Persons who are Deafened or Hard of Hearing in Nepal

Ms Neeta Keshary from SHRUTI, Nepal, presented JCA-AHF [Document 404](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Documents/docs-2020/July%202020%20meeting/JCA-AHF-Doc404.zip). According to her, hearing loss group – mild to moderate (25 to 64 dB) and deafened people (people who has profound hearing loss after linguistic development) in Nepal are not considered as persons with disabilities. The needs of hard of hearing persons, such as, hearing aids, cochlear implants, assistive devices, speech to text, captioning services, have not been officially provided. During the Covid-19 crisis, sign language interpretation was provided in the daily updates of the Covid-19 situation, however, there was no live or recorded captioning. Facing this situation, SHRUTI is conducting some activities to help Deafened and Hard of Hearing people, such as, providing live captioning, advocating, and providing other support.

Several meeting participants expressed their sympathy via chat box. The JCA-AHF Chairman suggested to send her presentation to ITU-D Q7/1 and seek for their advice.

* 1. NADP workshop on " Working and participating remotely when you are deaf or hard of hearing" (Lidia Best)

Ms Best briefly presented JCA-AHF [Document 403](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Documents/docs-2020/July%202020%20meeting/JCA-AHF-Doc403.zip). She has worked on NADP online workshop on “Working and participating remotely when you are deaf or hard of hearing” to close the gap of the knowledge and to empower the deaf and hard of hearing people to advocate for themselves. For example, information on how to provide captioning, suggestion to use Streamtext or web-based transmitting way was suggested. It was felt very important to have such online workshop, and NADP would continue to organize such one.

Mr Erich Kofmel from Autistic Minority International wrote on the chat box what he has written on his email earlier than this meeting: text communication should be considered as the same value as that of voice, accordingly many parts of the Technical Paper on Remote participation should be revised. Chat text in UN official languages other than English should also be allowed and interpreted. Otherwise autistic people and others who do not use voice are excluded.

Guidelines for virtual meetings should be separate from those for remote participation, and should be developed conducting a large-scale consultation. It should be understood that autistic persons and others are experiencing many sensory overload and cognitive issues.

The JCA-AHF Chairman responded that she would check the updated Technical Paper on the inclusion of people who don't speak or use text. She also encouraged Mr Kofmel to keep in touch to improve the guidelines.

Mr Heath wrote on chat box that the meetings of a mainstream political party in the UK have moved to Zoom, which is a great advantage to increase political participation, because many people have been typically excluded from physical meetings because of inaccessible buildings, distance etc.

Mr Masahito Kawamori, ITU-T Q26/16 Rapporteur, explained that telecom relay services is now institutionalized and would be officially implemented in Japan next year. Another thing is the work of new Technical Paper on remote sign language interpretation using web RTC has been completed by ITU-T Q26/16. He hopes that the guidelines be utilized by governments and organizations to implement safe and secure and accessible system for sign language interpreters as well as deaf and hard of hearing people to cope with this Covid-19 pandemic.

Then, replying to the question raised by the JCA-AHF Chairman, Mr Kawamori mentioned that ITU-T Q26 would be able to create a new work item specifically on accessibility for cognitive difficulties which includes autism and other diseases. He also thinks the concept of total conversation (for information, see ITU-T SG16 page [here](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/studygroups/com16/accessibility/Pages/conversation.aspx)) might be helpful for this as well.

Mr Grigory Miloradov from World Global Telecom (WGT) made a statement that WGT has conducted experiments with trial numbers on a platform to provide global telephone relay service (WGT GLEOSS project) to help those who use text to communicate on a free and fluent manner.

Ms Judith Hellerstein from ISOC Accessibility SIG explained about IGF DCAD and ISOC Accessibility SIG. She explained that DCAD addressed accessibility issues exclusively at IGF while ISOC Accessibility SIG addressed wider issues, including different needs of persons with cognitive, hearing, or vision disabilities. The later advocates on Zoom and other areas, also addresses people with limited bandwidth. She invited to join either group.

Ms Karina Chupina asked several questions: privacy issues when using speech recognition. What apps do with data, e.g., Google’s speech recognition; For the post Covid-19, what are strategic ways to provide trainings systematically for persons with disabilities and without disabilities; How to encourage employers and educators to make use of accessible ICT. Are there any guidelines to change attitudes of ICT users; And, how participation is defined in the context of ICT?

The JCA-AHF Chairman responded that some questions would be directed to ITU-D Q7/1 with which next JCA-AHF meeting may be collocated.

Ms Hellerstein commented to Ms Chupina regarding Google speech recognition. Google doesn't store the translation. Other platforms, such as Zoom, provide users of AI translated data to follow-up meetings.

1. Incoming Liaison Statements

The JCA-AHF Chairman invited the meeting participants to have a look at LSs listed on the agenda.

1. Any Other Business

A participant of the meeting (no name record was found on Zoom participant list, nor ITU registration) expressed his support for the WGT GLEOSS initiative, and he requested ITU to accelerate the process of the assignment of a humanitarian country code to implement the initiative.

1. Next JCA-AHF meeting

Next JCA-AHF meeting may be collocated with ITU-D Q7/1 (1-2 October 2020), or jointly held separately. Details will be announced on a later date.

1. Closing

The JCA-AHF Chairman thanked all speakers of the meeting, participants, SL interpreters, caption writers and TSB. She closed the meeting.

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