



Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)

**Second Meeting of the Telecommunication
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NOTE BY THE DIRECTOR

REPORT ON COUNCIL DELIBERATIONS ON DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

The present report reflects the outcomes of the Council 99 deliberations most relevant to the Telecommunication Development Sector. Some major issues are dealt with in more detail in separate documents, as indicated below.

1. Strengthening the regional presence

After lengthy discussions on secretariat document C99/14 and further proposals (the discussions are reflected in the summary records C99/79, C99/83, C99/124 and C99/133), Council decided to adopt Resolution 1143 (Doc. C99/118). All details on this Resolution and on follow-up action are provided in Document TDAG-2/8 which will be presented separately.

2. Operational plan for ITU-D

The linking of strategic, financial and operational planning was discussed on the basis of Doc. C99/31 which summarized the operational plans of the three Sectors and the General Secretariat. The discussion is contained in Doc. C99/113. The operational plans themselves were contained in a CD-ROM distributed to all councillors. Council decided to endorse the measures and elements to be included in the operational plans, and noted the consolidated plans that had been prepared to link the strategic, financial and operational plans.

3. Special assistance programmes

The report on the special assistance programmes is contained in document C99/38, which was noted as indicated in document C99/124.

BDT's assistance to the Palestinian Authority had followed the plan of action established in 1995, which included grants for the training of engineers and technicians, assistance in the management of frequencies, various technical studies and submission of three projects to a United Nations inter-agency coordinating meeting. A draft law to regulate the telecommunication sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina had been drawn up at round-table meetings in the presence of all parties concerned and had entered into force in September 1998. Assistance to Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda and Somalia had not been provided as planned, owing to the poor security conditions in those countries.

Nevertheless, training grants had been awarded in Burundi, Liberia and Rwanda. The Union was still awaiting the comments of the last two countries on the restructuring and reconstruction plans that had been transmitted to them. A request for special assistance from Sierra Leone had arrived too late and had consequently not been accepted by PP-98. [From C99/124 p. 9]

4. Final report on the Buenos Aires Action Plan

The final report on the Buenos Aires Action Plan is contained in document C99/39. In presenting the report, the Director said that the Buenos Aires Action Plan (BAAP) represented the first attempt to introduce operational planning in the Union and had guided the work of BDT and the Sector as a whole between 1994 and 1998. The report summarized the results of implementation of the Plan. The conclusions had been used to design and implement the Valletta Action Plan. Implementation of BAAP had cost nearly CHF 28 million, about one quarter of which had been used for global activities related to all developing countries.

The report was noted (document C99/124, p. 9).

5. Implementation of the LDC programme 1999-2003

The secretariat report and proposals were contained in document C99/58. The Director recalled that although WTDC-94 had approved a special programme for LDCs for the period 1994-1999, the Council had not subsequently earmarked funds for that purpose. WTDC-98 had approved a similar programme for the period 1999-2003, which included a strategy to provide assistance to only a few countries in each region each year, in order to increase the impact. Regular budget funds would be available for the new programme, as well as extrabudgetary funds, including TELECOM surplus funds. The document presented proposed criteria for selecting countries for assistance, it being noted, nevertheless, that most of the LDCs would have been covered by the programme during the two biennia. The Council was requested to note the report and provide guidance.

In answer to a series of questions from the representative of Spain, the Director said that the funds provided by the Union would be used as seed money to improve the regulatory environment in each country in order to make it more attractive to other investors. They might also be used to bring together Member States and Sector Members in order to identify those that wished to participate in specific projects, which would already have been shown to be feasible. Once local and international partners had been identified, the role of the Union would come to an end. The results would be measured after one or two years, with regard, for instance, to the numbers of lines or square kilometres and rural areas covered within a specified time-frame as determined by the regulatory body awarding the licence. It was hoped to assist six to eight countries each year and thus up to 34 countries by the end of the planned period. The type and amount of assistance to be provided would be decided on a case-by-case basis. It was essential that the administration of each country be committed to improving the regulatory environment for telecommunications and be prepared to take the difficult decisions that might entail.

The report was noted with a few modifications (document C99/58 p. 8).

6. Gender issues

The report on the inclusion of gender perspective in the work of the ITU (document C99/53) was presented to Council by the Deputy Secretary-General after the ITU Focal Point for Gender Issues had read out a message from Ms Angela King, Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women.

Council members welcomed the measures taken by the Secretary-General to implement the decisions of the Valletta and Minneapolis Conferences. The report was noted.

7. Use of TELECOM surplus funds

The report on the use of TELECOM surplus funds (document C99/34) was introduced by the Director.

The Council was invited to approve the use of those funds and to take note of the progress achieved in implementing the various projects being financed with them, in pursuance of Resolution 11 (Rev. Minneapolis, 1998) and Council Resolution 1111 (1997). No new requests for the use of those funds were being made. The document provided a summary of the four main components of the TELECOM surplus programme: human resources development (in particular through centres of excellence), infrastructure development, application of new technologies, and assistance provided to countries in special need. The 13 projects being implemented under those four headings and the funds allocated to each project were listed in Table 1 of the document. Of the CHF 17.5 million originally available for projects, a total of CHF 14.1 million had been allocated, with CHF 3.3 million available for future allocation to new projects. The revenues generated by the fund over the past two years had more than made up for the expenditures incurred, with the result that the fund was in a stronger position than two years earlier. In his view, that position was attributable to sound management practices which were in conformity with the guiding principles of the TELECOM surplus programme, that is, the need to build partnerships on the basis of seed money provided from the funds. The relatively low level of expenditure to date was the result of delays in recruiting partners, attracting additional contributions, developing partner-oriented project documents and recruiting experts. To address those problems, he had shifted responsibility for identifying and implementing suitable projects from headquarters to the regional coordinators and heads of the regional offices.

Despite the low level of expenditures there had been notable progress in project implementation. For example, for each of the proposed centres of excellence, some training and professional development activities would be implemented before the end of the year and ten telemedicine, six telecentre and two tele-education projects were under way. The ITU financial commitment to such projects varied from 4% to 35%, which showed that outside partners were contributing the majority of funding. Since taking office a few months earlier, he had taken steps to accelerate project implementation. He had met with the directors general of the centre of excellence in Dakar and agreed on the need to expand the concept to all French-speaking countries in Africa. Moreover, he had concluded two collaborative agreements with Canadian private and public partners in relation to the two centres of excellence in Africa, and a further agreement with the Geneva World Trade Centre and Wisekey, to expand electronic commerce projects to a greater number of developing countries.

Recalling that the TELECOM surplus programme was directed by a Steering Committee composed of the Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General, Director of BDT and President of TELECOM, he assured the Council that all the newly elected officials on the Committee were totally committed to the programme and to ensuring efficient and timely implementation of projects. He hoped that he could count on the continued support of the Council for the programme, whose major beneficiaries were the developing countries and in particular the LDCs.

Council expressed wide appreciation and approved the use of the funds (document C99/124 p. 2).

8. Future regional telecommunication development conferences

Following the advice of TDAG, document C99/60 was presented to Council with the recommendation that

- no regional telecommunication development conference be held in the fourth quarter of 1999 or the first quarter of 2000; the budget allocation for the conference in 1999 will be used for implementation of the Valletta Action Plan in relation to the regional presence;
- the conference foreseen for 2001 be held as a worldwide series of regional preparatory meetings for the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-02).

After discussion, these proposals were approved (document C99/124 p. 6).
