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| C:\Users\ponder\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.Word\BDT-25th_anniversary_2017-Logo_411959-3_transparent.png | **World Telecommunication DevelopmentConference 2017 (WTDC-17)****Buenos Aires, Argentina, 9-20 October 2017** | C:\Users\ponder\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.Word\BDT-25th_anniversary_2017-Logo_411959-1_transparent.png |
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| PLENARY MEETING | **Document WTDC-17/40-E** |
|  | **20 September 2017** |
|  | **Original: English** |
| Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization (CTO) |
| Proposals for the work of the conference |
| CONTRIBUTION BY THE COMMONWEALTH TELECOMMUNICATIONS ORGANISATION |
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| **Priority area:** - Other proposals**Summary:**The Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation’s (CTO) contribution fro WTDC 17 is based on the key priority areas identified during the regional preparatory meetings held for Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas. It proposes areas for consideration by ITU -D for its Action Plan for 2018-2021 based on these identified priorities. The contribution is aligned to the theme of the WTDC – ICT for Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the CTO’s own Strategic Goals.**Expected results:**Provoke thought and discussion on certain areas relating to the work of ITU-D |

 CTO/40/1

# Introduction

The Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO) congratulates the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) on the hosting of the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2017 (WTDC-17) in the beautiful city of Buenos Aires.

CTO Member States share the values and aspirations which unite the Commonwealth of democracy, human rights and the rule of law and we acknowledge the role of civil society in supporting the goals and values of the Commonwealth. The CTO works to support the development and use of ICTs within the Commonwealth and beyond; to promote the provision and use of ICTs to meet the needs of members, to support development in Member countries, and to ensure the inclusion of marginalised people; and to promote effective cooperation and partnership amongst our members and other organisations.

It is well recognised that ICTs must play a crucial role in achieving the aims of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). New technologies enable access to remote education or healthcare, facilitate research and innovation, disseminate information instantly and foster global partnerships. ICTs also have a role to play in promoting gender equality through enabling political participation; in reducing energy consumption and contributing to the efforts to tackle climate change; in increasing food production by providing farmers with new ways to access essential information and new markets; and in disaster risk reduction through early warning and strengthening connectivity.

Undoubtedly, there have been significant efforts which have gone into making ICTs universally accessible to all Commonwealth citizens. However, as with the rest of the world, significant gaps still persist within our member countries, with perhaps the most striking of all being the number of people yet to use the Internet:

• 72 per cent of people in Africa are yet to use the Internet;

• in the Pacific region, 65 per cent do not have access to the Internet;

• 55 per cent in Asia, 35 per cent in the Americas region, and 20 per cent in Europe do not have access to the Internet.

The reality is that half the world’s population are yet to be connected to the Internet, and setting out to connect the next billion people requires significantly more investment by all stakeholders.

It has been estimated that GDP can be boosted by 12% in developing countries if broadband penetration has reached 80% in 2030.[[1]](#footnote-1) It is also believed that by catalysing the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the ICT sector could potentially earn up to US$ 2.1 trillion in revenue by 2030.[[2]](#footnote-2) So it is clear that investment in ICTs can enable governments worldwide to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and reap the benefits that ICTs can bring to their national social and economic development.

The CTO therefore fully supports the theme of WTDC 17 – “ICT for Sustainable Development Goals”. Indeed this theme is very much aligned to the work that the CTO has been doing and like any other membership organisation, the CTO is focusing its resources in those areas that matter most to its members, a significant percentage of which belong to small island developing states, least developed countries and land locked developing countries.

**Proposed Activities based on Priorities for the CTO and its Members**

During the various Regional Preparatory Meetings which were convened within the last year for the WTDC, several priority areas were identified. In preparing this submission, the CTO has taken into consideration those of particular interest to the CTO members in Africa, Americas and Asia-Pacific.

Based on the key issues identified by these regions and the areas mentioned within the ITU-D Action Plan, the CTO has listed key areas for which further capacity building activities are needed. CTO recognises that needs may vary among countries based on governance structures, size, resources and geographic location. It is important to note however, that the broad suggestions offered below are meant to provoke thought and discussions on the issues as to what the ITU-D can offer.

1 It is well evidenced that broadband can promote employment, encourage innovation and increase productivity, and thus stimulate economic growth. The CTO sees a greater need for capacity building among developing nations, which enables the development and enforcement of effective policy and regulatory measures that allow for universal, affordable and high-quality broadband connectivity, and that also encourage investment by market players.

2 The smart city is one of the aspirations of the digital age. CTO would suggest that capacity building activities include a focus on providing guidance to states on updating their legal and regulatory frameworks to support the effective use of advanced technologies.

3 Many parts of the world are yet to experience 4G, yet, governments and private industry have begun laying the foundation for 5G technologies. This means that more spectrum must be made available and existing spectrum must be efficiently allocated. In line with the BDT’s role to provide assistance in various aspects of spectrum management including efficient tools for managing the spectrum, the CTO proposes that there be efforts to build capacity of national regulatory bodies to provide them with the required knowledge to fairly allocate spectrum at reasonable costs to providers and to also treat with unused spectrum.

4 To develop trust in the sector and ensure that countries and communities can reap full benefits of ICTs, there is the need to invest resources into cybersecurity. All stakeholders have important roles to play in building trust and confidence in the use of ICTs. In particular, given that SMEs contribute up to 40% of national income (GDP) in emerging economies, CTO also believes there is a need to assist SMEs to implement the necessary measures to reduce vulnerability to common cyber threats.

5 Disasters, whether natural or man-made, can disrupt all sectors of the economy and negatively impact on growth and development. Advances in ICTs provide opportunities to strengthen resilience of critical infrastructure and enhance connectivity. CTO views the creation of storage hubs for emergency response equipment within disaster prone regions as a beneficial activity which would reduce the time taken for such assistance to reach affected zones.

The above-mentioned areas are all in alignment with the CTO’s Strategic Goals. CTO remains committed to continued and strengthened collaboration with the ITU-D in these areas, as well as the goals and outputs listed within the Draft Action Plan.

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1. System Transformation Report, GeSI and Accenture with the ITU, June 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-2)