



Telecommunication
Development Bureau (BDT)



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Geneva, 22 January 2021

To:

- ITU Member States
- ITU-D Sector Members
- ITU-D Academia

Subject: Conformance and Interoperability for development: its present and vision of the future

Dear Sir/Madam,

The widespread conformance and interoperability (C&I) of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) equipment and systems through the implementation of relevant programmes, policies and decisions can increase market opportunities, competitiveness and reliability as well as encouraging global integration and trade.

Through [PP-18 Resolution 177](#) and [WTDC-17 Resolution 47](#) the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has elaborated a C&I programme to support national, regional and international efforts.

The ITU Development Sector (ITU-D) is currently conducting a study on C&I and the future C&I landscape, in line with Pillar 3 (capacity building) and 4 (assistance to developing countries) of the ITU C&I programme.

The outcome of the study will be a White Paper, titled “Conformance and Interoperability: its present and vision of the future” to contribute to the work of the [ITU-D Study Group 4/2](#), guide discussions on the future scope of ITU-D activities relating to the field, as well as to ensure improved support for ITU membership heading to the WTDC 2021 in Addis Ababa.

To ensure evidence-based analysis toward the elaboration of the white paper, a data collection exercise is being developed through the attached stakeholders’ questionnaire prepared by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) in collaboration with ITU Standardization (TSB) and ITU Radiocommunication (BR) bureaus.

I would kindly seek your support in answering the questionnaire **by 19 February 2021** to jointly shape the scope of future work on C&I and thank you in advance for your contribution

Mr Miguel Alcaine, ITU Area Representative for Central America, Tegucigalpa (miguel.alcaine@itu.int) and Mr Vladimir Daigele, Programme Officer, Telecommunications Network and Spectrum Management Division (Access) (vladimir.daigele@itu.int) are at your disposal for further information.

Yours faithfully,

[Original signed]

Doreen Bogdan-Martin
Director

Annex: Questionnaire



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Conformity & Interoperability for development Questionnaire

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is developing a White Paper analyzing the impact of the Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) work on Conformance and Interoperability (C&I) on different ITU stakeholders. Specifically, the White Paper will identify lessons learned from existing ITU C&I work on capacity building and assistance to developing countries; present a vision of the future, providing prospective analysis and recommending new ITU-D C&I workstreams which draw from lessons learned, the application of C&I to emerging technology trends, interoperability and commercial implications. To help inform the content of the White Paper, the ITU-D now seeks input from stakeholders through responses to this questionnaire.

Background

Conformity with international standards such as ITU Recommendations is one of the core principles underlying the global interoperability of ICT networks, devices and services. The ITU C&I programme for development was initiated at the request of the ITU's membership by PP-18 Res. 177 and WTDC-17 Res. 47, to enhance the C&I of ICT products.

Feedback from ITU-D Members are key inputs to improve the quality of assistances on the field and enhanced support to reduce the digital divide and standardisation gap by assisting developing countries with human resource and infrastructure capacity focus.

Since its inception, the ITU C&I programme has developed a series of reports and guidelines.¹ These include:

- ITU-D Study Group Q4/2 Report (2017) – assistance to developing countries for implementing conformance and interoperability programmes;²
- Guidelines for developing countries on establishing conformity assessment test labs in different regions;³
- Guidelines for development, implementation and management of Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs);⁴
- Feasibility Study for a Conformance Testing Center;⁵
- EUIPO-ITU report: The Economic Cost of IPR Infringement in the Smartphones Sector.⁶

¹ [ITU C&I webpage Pillars 3 and 4.](#)

² [ITU Study Group Q4/2 Report \(2017\).](#)

³ [Guidelines for developing countries on establishing conformity assessment test labs in different regions.](#)

⁴ [Guidelines for development, implementation and management of Mutual Recognition Agreements \(MRAs\).](#)

⁵ [Feasibility Study for a Conformance Testing Center.](#)

⁶ [EUIPO-ITU Report: The Economic Cost of IPR Infringement in the Smartphones Sector.](#)

The new White Paper will assess the impact of this work on the C&I activity and process of different stakeholders and present recommendations for future ITU work, including contributions to the ITU-D Study Group Q4/2.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire is provided in Annex 1 to this document.

Responding to the Questionnaire

Respondents are kindly requested to return the completed questionnaire **before 19 February 2021** to tnd@itu.int

Annex 1

Conformance and Interoperability Questionnaire

1. Conformance and Interoperability

1.1 What priority is given to C&I conformity within your organisation?

- What types of C&I conformity assessment are considered by your organisation?
- What equipment is required to conform with C&I requirements?
- Is conformance with C&I requirements a prerequisite for market access in your country?

1.2 What priority is given to C&I conformity testing within your organisation?

- What C&I testing facilities does your organisation have?
- Is C&I conformity testing by an approved national test facility required?
- What conformance provisions are covered by C&I testing (Electro Magnetic Compatibility (EMC), standards including ITU-T/R Recommendations, national standards, other recognised international standards (IEEE, 3GPP, ETSI, FCC, etc)?

1.3 Why is C&I important to the global ICT market and reliable connectivity?

- Is and appropriate level of priority given to C&I and C&I testing by your organisation, national regulatory authorities and equipment vendors? Why?
- How can the costs of market access be covered so that controls are in place to allow only approved products into the market?
- How can the costs of equipment without conformance present in the market be measured?
- What is the ideal situation of interinstitutional cooperation (e.g. between customs, counterfeit combat, safety issues, SAR, open standard and interoperability of 5G networks) that would allow effective market access?

1.4 In a hyperconnected world, how can C&I be most effectively managed?

1.5 What are the gaps in C&I conformity assessment which the ITU might address?

2. Collaboration and Harmonization of Procedures

2.1 Should every country have or be part of a robust C&I framework (e.g. agreements, national testing facilities for C&I)? Why?

2.2 Are Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRA) effective tools for managing C&I? Why?

- What are the important elements of an MRA?
- How can existing MRAs be improved?

2.3 What could be substitutes to an MRA, if any?

3. Trends

3.1 What emerging challenges do you foresee for C&I?

- Are C&I requirements keeping pace with technological advances (Software Defined Radio, Software Defined Network, Cloud-based networks, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Blockchain)?
- How can C&I requirements be improved to strike a balance between trust and control?
- How can the application of technologies such as AI and Blockchain improve trust in C&I?
What are the C&I challenges and opportunities during COVID-19?