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| **Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG)**  **23rd Meeting, Geneva, 9-11 April 2018** | P:\SUP\Logos\Post-150th Anniv\ITU-logo-UNblue.jpg |
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| BDT Management Retreat 2018 debrief | |
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| **Summary:**  The BDT Management Retreat was held from 5 to 9 February 2018 in Geneva. Participants analysed the current state of play in the ICT industry in the light of the outcomes of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-17) and how the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) will fulfil its mandate in a rapidly changing, increasingly complex, and ever-more challenging environment. The key areas discussed during the retreat are presented in this report and will form the basis for a robust strategy and action plan for BDT to respond to the massive changes occurring in the industry while, at the same time, meeting the great expectations of members.  **Action required:**  TDAG is invited to note this document.  **References:**  Retreat presentations and notes. | |

1. **Introduction**

1.1 The BDT Management Retreat, held from 5 to 9 February 2018, brought together BDT professional staff at the P4 level and above from the headquarters and regional and area offices to engage in open and frank discussions on how BDT will implement its strong mandate from the World Telecommunication Development Conference (Buenos Aires, 2017).

1.2 WTDC-17 adopted three blueprints for telecommunication/ICT development worldwide over the next four years: the Buenos Aires Declaration; the ITU–D contribution to the draft ITU strategic plan for 2020–2023, to be adopted at the forthcoming Plenipotentiary Conference 2018; and the Buenos Aires Action Plan, comprising programmes, regional initiatives, new and revised resolutions and recommendations, and new and revised Questions to be studied by ITU-D study groups.

1. **Structure and format**

2.1 The five-day retreat was conducted in plenary and breakout sessions. Presentations on key topics were made in plenary. Sub-topics were discussed in breakout sessions and reported to the plenary. Each main session began with a presentation giving an overview and situational (Strength Weakness Opportunity and Threat) analysis. Each session was led by a moderator in order to keep the discussions focused.

1. **Overview and situational analysis**

3.1 The retreat began with a poignant “overview and situational analysis” highlighting the current technological state of play, the financial and economic environment and the changing nature of the industry.

3.2 ITU-D’s core mandate was re-stated from the outset: “to discharge, within its specific sphere of competence, the Union's dual responsibility as a United Nations specialized agency and executing agency for implementing projects under the United Nations development system or other funding arrangements so as to facilitate and enhance telecommunication by offering, organizing and coordinating technical cooperation and assistance activities.”

3.3 The era of artificial intelligence (AI), big data, the Internet of Things (IoT) and cryptocurrencies is here, and with it many challenges and opportunities.

3.4 A series of presentations were made on key thematic areas of ITU-D work: regional perspective; ICT infrastructure, spectrum management and digital broadcasting; policy and regulation; cybersecurity; ICT statistics and big data; ICT applications; digital inclusion; emergency telecommunications, climate change and e-waste; capacity building and innovation.

3.5 In a brainstorming session, participants answered a set of questions focused on how ITU-D and BDT can adopt new ways of doing things under the existing internal and external environments, mapping out organizations and players with similar goals and reflecting on repositioning BDT.

3.6 On the question “Who are we and what values do we stand for?”, answers varied, but the most common was that “BDT is the development arm of ITU that helps members transform their ICT (digital) aspirations into action”. BDT’s core values were defined as “a trusted and respected partner with proven expertise, excellence, transparency, trust, openness, neutral in letter and spirit, universality and people-centred”.

1. **Operational planning, strategic objectives and the Buenos Aires Action Plan**

4.1 Significant time was dedicated to operational planning in the light of the outcomes of WTDC-17 (Declaration, Strategic Plan and Action Plan). A presentation on these outcomes underlined the importance of linking strategic, financial and operational planning in ITU. It was stressed that BDT needs to align fully its activities in the operational plan with these strong mandates from WTDC-17.

4.2 In a collaborative exercise to develop a draft operational plan for the next four years, working group discussions focused on the four fundamental objectives approved by WTDC-17 as the main areas of focus of BDT work.

* **Objective 1** - **Coordination:** Foster international cooperation and agreement on telecommunication/ICT development issues.
* **Objective 2** - **Modern and secure telecommunication/ICT infrastructure:** Foster the development of infrastructure and services, including building confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs.
* **Objective 3** - **Enabling environment:** Foster an enabling policy and regulatory environment conducive to sustainable telecommunication/ICT development.
* **Objective 4** - **Inclusive digital society:** Foster the development and use of telecommunications/ICTs and applications to empower people and societies for sustainable development.

4.3 Participants discussed, objective by objective, how to present indicators, the synergy between the headquarters and the regional and area offices and ways to collaborate within ITU – across Sectors and among BDT departments – highlighting the linkages between BDT and ITU areas of work, and the delivery mechanisms for regional initiatives.

4.4 BDT is expected to implement the Buenos Aires Action Plan (BaAP) in an efficient and timely manner in response to the increased needs and great expectations of the membership. But the BDT budget is tight, and human resources are thinly stretched. In this context, specific proposals and innovative ideas were discussed to enhance the features of the Operational Plan System (OPS) to facilitate implementation and reporting of BaAP activities.

4.5 It was stressed that BaAP is premised on a results-based structure, with outcomes defined for each objective, and key performance indicators defined for each output. Results-based management is “a management approach that directs organizational processes, resources, products and services towards the achievement of measurable results. It provides the management frameworks and tools for strategic planning, risk management, performance monitoring and evaluation and financing activities based on targeted results”. Participants were reminded that this shift in focus from activities to results helps to better articulate strategic goals, objectives, outcomes and outputs, and to better evaluate their achievement using indicators and targets.

4.6 Participants brainstormed on ways to enhance BDT resource mobilization efforts in an environment of increasing demands. Understanding this environment, mapping the right stakeholders and understanding their actions and journeys will be key in developing a strategy and a road map to help attract more funds to speed up the implementation of BaAP.

4.7 Presentations and discussions on enhancing project management confirmed that ITU has a long-standing experience in designing, developing and implementing ICT-related projects. These projects make a difference in people’s lives, and offer sustainable and innovative solutions around the world to achieve development.

4.8 In terms of cross-cutting issues, much of the focus was on nurturing ownership of BDT values, encouraging thought leadership and staff empowerment, enhancing communication, and listening to others and keeping good relationship among staff members.

1. **Meeting with elected officials**

5.1 The Secretary-General described the retreat as an important event, which not only gives BDT management an opportunity to get together, but also allows staff from the ITU regional and area offices to meet their colleagues at headquarters. He commended BDT staff for their excellent work, despite the limited resources.

5.2 The Deputy Secretary-General presented the new ITU headquarters building. An architectural competition selected the winning design and three other laureates from 74 entries. He also spoke about the Inter-Sector Coordination Task Force.

5.3 The Director of the Radiocommunication Bureau (BR) underlined the importance of the Radio Regulations, the international treaty governing the use of the radio-frequency spectrum and satellite orbit resources and of world radiocommunication conferences (WRCs), which revise and update these international regulations.

5.5 The Director of the Standardization Sector (TSB) gave a presentation focusing on ICT innovations. Mobile applications, artificial intelligence and machine learning, bitcoin, blockchain, digital finance, data and big data analytics, IoT, community and social media are just some of the developments that are transforming society.

**6. Crafting a strategy for impact**

6.1 To craft a strategy for impact, participants asked themselves a few hard questions. “What are our challenges in the current environment? Can we reinvent ourselves? What are we doing with big data, AI, blockchain, cryptocurrencies, IoT? Are we losing ground in ICT4SDG projects? Are we tapping non-traditional opportunities? Do our membership and partnerships reflect the external environment and digital economy mindset?” Are we communicating well internally and externally? Are we thinly spread? Are we connecting the dots? Do we have delivery capacity? Can we create an ICT4SDG package and deliver?”

6.2 BDT is well-positioned to convert technology potential into system-level impact. BDT also has the expertise to help countries in their digital transformation journeys. Digital transformation involves the planning of investments in technology in a structured and holistic way, based on a country’s strategic vision and needs to reach system and population level impact. Digital transformation is achieved through an ecosystem approach to plan infrastructure, policies and regulations, architectures that are secure, interoperable, scalable and highly reliable.

6.3 Large projects for the digital transformation of sectors could be implemented in the following areas: emergency telecommunications, financial, health, education, agriculture and smart government.

**7. Conclusion**

7.1 The BDT Director thanked everyone for their active participation throughout the week: a week of friendship and one that will shape the future of BDT. The key areas discussed during the retreat will form the basis for a robust strategy and action plan for BDT to respond to the massive changes occurring in the industry while, at the same time, meeting the great expectations of members. Summary of key areas discussed can be found **in the Annex to this document.**

**Annex**

**SUMMARY OF KEY AREAS DISCUSSED DURING THE RETREAT**

1. **Global overview and regional perspective**

* Lead in exploiting big data and IoT in capacity building and regulation. Forge partnerships with lead agencies, for example, on epidemics and statistics. Implement projects such as the BDT ebola project.
* Lead in exploiting AI in capacity building for new digital skills to address unemployment and in creating regulatory and legal frameworks.
* Exploit existing partnerships.
* Forge partnerships with non-traditional entities, for example, mayoral offices in the case of smart cities.
* Enhance collaboration among ITU’s three Bureaux on issues such as smart sustainable cities, IoT, IMT (5G), digital finance, artificial intelligence, big data and cloud computing. This is important because some of the regional initiatives in the Buenos Aires Action Plan focus on the digital economy, security, resilience, ICT applications and digital infrastructure.
* Promote ITU regional work and culture as natural partners for ICT development.
* Increase ITU prestige inside and beyond telecommunications.

1. **Possible ares of focus in the next 5 to 10 years**

In order for BDT to be the number one choice for all ICT (digital) development for ITU members and partners (current and potential), the following activities have been discussed during the retreat:

* Develop compelling products, for example, in youth employment, e-health, e-agriculture, 5G and IoT and data management. Stay people-centred and keep innovating.  
  Take a strategic approach to project conceptualization and implementation.
* Members and staff are the two greatest tangible assets: Adopt a human-touch approach when dealing with members (give them a call, meet them on mission).
* Reach out to the new membership (high potential and high retention probability).
* Look for unsolved problems, needs and opportunities.
* Uphold core values, the purpose and the need to operate by example.
* Bring a new enthusiasm in staff with social and professional inclusiveness. For example, celebrate successes.
* Staff is our biggest asset for change. Try a lot of new opportunities with a start-up mindset, and a risk-taking attitude.
* Create a communication framework (campaigns, guidelines and training). Enhance communication (external and internal) with stories that have a human face.
* Rebrand ITU-D products to give them a modern “look and feel”.
* The rebranding should be aligned with the ongoing branding exercise that will result in one-ITU visual identity.
* Appoint a spokesperson to serve as a “goodwill ambassador” for ITU-D.
* Develop a partnership strategy and value propositions.
* Create attractive cases for funding. Adopt a motto, along the lines:

***“Your partner for digital transformation” OR “Building your Digital Future” OR “Bringing about Digital Transformation”***

**3. Enhancing project management**

* Focus on key areas for “winner” projects with campaigns to raise funds. Allocate seed funds for projects related to regional initiatives.
* Build a Project Partnership Ecosystem.

**4. Implementing the Buenos Aires Action Plan using the operational plan system**

* Revisit and streamline the content that is generally entered in the OPS to make it more results-oriented. Use primarily the outcome indicators given in the WTDC-17 Final report. Additional performance indicators can be added if needed.
* Link photos and videos generated from implementing actions to the OPS to enrich results-based management reporting.

***Roles and responsibilities between the headquarters and the regions***

* Strengthen coordination, communication and planning between the headquarters and regional and area offices in order to ensure full alignment with the needs and priorities of the countries.
* The headquarters should set the tone in establishing links and developing core products and regional and area offices should deliver and implement on the ground. Regional offices should be more involved in headquarter activities related to their regions.

***Collaboration within ITU – across Sectors and among BDT departments***

* Improve the communication to, and from, the Inter- Sectoral Coordination Task Force. Re-establish some of the former thematic inter-sectoral taskforces. The headquarters should develop tools collaboratively with regional offices, while tailoring them for regional needs.

***Delivery mechanisms for regional initiatives***

* Work to implement common areas of work and regional initiatives horizontally in addition to vertical implementation. Engage as many relevant stakeholders as possible in regional initiatives, but start by promoting partnerships with stakeholders who were involved in the formulation of regional initiatives.

**5. Resource mobilization**

* Develop a clear resource mobilization strategy and action plan and communicate it. Establish ICT funding targets for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Develop and communicate a funding need for each focus area, including in the regions. Target large scale projects in key areas. Develop a common motto, for example: “digital planet, without exclusion”. Create technology centres and roadshows. Publish research reports in main areas of BDT work. Consolidate, for BDT, key messages with a human touch. Share success stories.
* Encourage all BDT staff to be involved in resource mobilization efforts.

**6. Cross-cutting issues**

***Nurturing ownership of BDT core values:***

* Raise awareness of the values of “a trusted and respected partner with proven expertise, excellence, transparency, trust, openness, neutral in letter and spirit, universality and people-centred” to BDT staff through reminders and staff meetings. Recognize, continually, staff who excel in one or more of these values. Foster these values throughout ITU by ensuring that they are reiterated in staff induction programmes. Lead by example in our values and behaviour.

***Encouraging thought leadership at all levels:***

* Empowerment is key to thought leadership at all levels. Externally, it is important to anticipate future needs and stay ahead of the curve by enhancing expertise and doing proper ground work. Be active in key events. Learn with key experts. Internally, it is paramount to encourage cross-fertilization of ideas, structured learning on different topics (with the other Sectors) and to develop a knowledge repository.

***Encouraging staff empowerment:***

* Allow staff to try out new innovative ideas and methods. Engender a culture of openness. Build a fund for research. Develop exchange programmes or second staff to Sector Members for a limited period of time. Develop a buddy-mentor programme. Arrange meetings with membership at planned events such as WSIS, Council working groups and so on.

***Enhancing external communication with members and non-members:***

* Refresh advocacy and outreach campaigns. Adapt messages to the audience. Conduct (external) cross-sectoral campaigns. Develop promotional material in a timely manner. Use the social media guidelines for staff when communicating via social media. Tell stories with a human face.

***Enhancing internal communication:***

* Hold informal “retreat style” department meetings. Encourage all staff to cultivate horizontal and vertical informal discussions across departments, regions and bureaux (push by management). Hold professional chats and dialogues on thematic areas of work. Hold brown bag lunches to share. Encourage job rotation programmes in order for all staff to understand the challenges of other departments and functions.
* Modernize the website. Use the ICT4D photo library and other repositories. Use the Communication Policy Manual that came out of the retreat in 2016.

***Listening to others and keeping good relationship among staff members:***

* The art of listening: Do not underestimate the power of listening. Listening is a skill and a virtue. Listening generates respect. Listening is an attitude. Recognize and show that you are listening. Enforce a culture of listening. Treat listening also as a collective-thinking exercise.

***Creating a better working environment:***

* Allow for work rotation. Encourage teamwork by putting different people together in task teams. Organize social gatherings (such as social days, national food days, regular cultural and sport activities, staff parties, free refreshments and regular lunches together). Nurture individual trust and relationships. Introduce the concept of a “change agent” in BDT and reward those who are active.

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