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| **Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG)**  **26th Meeting, Virtual, 16 June 2020** | C:\Users\comas\AppData\Local\Temp\Rar$DRa0.735\jpg\ITU official logo_blue_RGB.jpg |
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| Chairman, Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG) | |
| REPORT OF THE 26TH TDAG MEETING | |

**Summary**

The Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG) held an extraordinary meeting on 16 June 2020, with one key item on its agenda: to discuss and approve high-level terms of reference for its two working groups established on 5 June 2020 to prepare for the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC‑21), scheduled to take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 8-19 November 2021. The “TDAG Working Group on WTDC Preparations” and the “TDAG Working Group on WTDC Resolutions, Declaration and Thematic Priorities” are open to all ITU Member States and ITU-D Sector Members. They may meet electronically, as required, and otherwise communicate electronically. They may meet during TDAG, normally not at the same time as another group. They will begin work in July 2020, and their terms of reference are contained in [DT/3 (Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG26-200616-TD-0003/en).

1. **Introduction**

The world needs meaningful connectivity and we must ensure that our WTDC delivers an action plan that will make the dream of global connectivity a reality, said Ms Doreen Bogdan‑Martin, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT). It was noted that on 12 June 2020, the United Nations Secretary-General issued his “Roadmap for Digital Cooperation,” in which he calls for action to connect, respect, and protect all people in the digital age. As that roadmap underscores right up front, connectivity is a privilege that is not enjoyed by all, the Director said recalling the launch.

The Chairman of TDAG, Ms Roxanne McElvane Webber (United States), announced that the report of the virtual meeting of 2-5 June 2020 was available on the website, thanked BDT for contributing the lion's share, recalled that a major milestone of that meeting was the creation of the three working groups, and asked TDAG to complete the appointment of leaders.

* **TDAG working group on the Strategic and Operational Plans**. For this group, the terms of reference had been approved, as had its leadership. The group is chaired by Ms Blanca González (Spain) assisted by two TDAG Vice-chairmen: Mr Christopher Kemei (Kenya) and Mr Wim Rullens (Netherlands).
* **TDAG Working Group on WTDC Preparations.** The meeting confirmed the appointment of Mr Santiago Reyes-Borda (Canada) as Chairman.
* **TDAG Working Group on WTDC Resolutions,** **Declaration and Thematic Priorities**. The meeting appointed Dr Ahmad Reza Sharafat (Islamic Republic of Iran) as Chairman. Dr Sharafat is also the current Chairman of ITU-D Study Group 2.

1. **Adoption of the agenda**

The meeting agreed to add to the agenda in[**Document 1**](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG26-C-0001/en) the following three contributions from Member States: Document 2 from the Russian Federation, Document 3 from the United Arab States and Document 4 from the United States. With this modification the agenda was adopted. The contributions were then presented in the order in which they had been received by BDT.

1. **Presentation of contributions**

Presenting [Document 2](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG26-C-0002/en), the Russian Federation drew attention to the legal status of the TDAG working groups, underlining that they must not give advice or assist the Director of the Bureau directly as that is the role of TDAG, in keeping with the rules governing ITU-D. The Working Group on the Preparations for WTDC-21 could review WTDC preliminary proposals, including responses to the survey conducted by BDT on WTDC reform, that had been discussed during the two Web dialogues on WTDC held in March and April 2020 and during the [TDAG-20 virtual meeting on   
2-5 June 2020](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/TDAG/Pages/TDAG25/default.aspx). It could also develop proposals on preparatory meetings and other events prior to the conference. Turning to the second Working Group, the Russian Federation proposed that this group could review WTDC resolutions, examine their number and subject matter, and consider streamlining, to avoid any repetitions and duplication with the resolutions of the Plenipotentiary Conference, the Council, the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly and the Radiocommunication Assembly. Furthermore, it could align ITU‑D thematic priorities with proposed WTDC “regional priorities” and study group Questions taking into account proposals of ITU-D study groups, outcomes of the regional preparatory meetings for WTDC-21, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and relevant Action Lines of the World Summit on the Information (WSIS) for which ITU has lead responsibility.

The **United Arab Emirates**, in its [Document 3](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG26-C-0003/en), highlighted comments and questions it had on the draft terms of reference for the two groups and needed clarity before moving forward. What was meant by “thematic tracks”? This would be a new concept for WTDC and needed to be understood clearly. Clarification was also needed on “key partners and potential funding partners”. Who are these partners? What would be their role; and in what capacity would they participate in WTDC and provide funds? Pending clarification, the United Arab Emirates had proposed, in its contribution, to replace “key partners” with “conference participants” including high-level participants, adding that participation categories were well defined in the basic instruments of ITU. The contribution also questioned why there is a growing shift from “regional initiatives”, a well-known concept in the ITU community, to “regional priorities”? Regarding the second working group, the contribution proposed to review existing WTDC resolutions, and consider streamlining, to avoid repetitions and duplication with the resolutions of the Plenipotentiary Conference. Streamlining would be done as needed, and was an important concept to have in the terms of reference to reinforce the point that the exercise was not about suppressing any resolutions but, rather, about making them concise and implementable.

Presenting [Document 4](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG26-C-0004/en), the **United States** first expressed appreciation for the efforts of the BDT Director to consult the membership on how it might reorient WTDC‑21 to focus more on development and position BDT as a Bureau fit for purpose, noting that the Web dialogues and subsequent TDAG meeting of 2 to 5 June 2020 were an excellent opportunity for the membership to begin this journey. The proposed revisions to the draft terms of reference for the two working groups had been put forward to enable these groups to examine and provide recommendations to TDAG‑21 consistent with Resolutions 1 and 31 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of WTDC. The objective of the Working Group on WTDC preparations was to facilitate a solutions-based conference focusing on development issues. This group was to review the options discussed during the two TDAG Web dialogues on WTDC , held in March and April 2020, and related membership contributions to TDAG-20 on WTDC; make recommendations for the Director on preparatory meetings and promotional events prior to the conference; and make recommendations for the Director on arrangements of the work of the conference, including the conference agenda.

With regard to the Working Group on WTDC Resolutions and Declaration, the United States proposed to add “thematic priorities” to the title, underlining that the mission of this group would be to advance initial discussions on the administrative elements of the conference to help facilitate interregional agreement and create efficiencies in time spent on these matters at WTDC-21. The group was to review WTDC resolutions, examine their number and subject matter, and consider streamlining as proposed by the membership.

The presentations of the above contributions were followed by a brief insightful overview of Document [DT/2](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG26-200616-TD-0002/en), representing a full compilation of proposals from the three Member States. Mr Santiago Reyes-Borda gave that overview, stressing that the tasks ahead were critically urgent. The first order of business was for the meeting to reconfirm the earlier agreement that the discussion was about WTDC-21 and not WTDC-25, considering that specific tasks resulting from the outcomes of the Web dialogues on WTDC reform need to be implemented as soon as possible. The meeting reiterated that, indeed, the focus was WTDC-21.

1. **Discussion and approval of the terms of reference**

Document [DT/2](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG26-200616-TD-0002/en) was discussed paragraph by paragraph. The consensus reached, including on the points summarized below, led to the adoption of the terms of reference for the TDAG Working Group on WTDC Preparations and the TDAG Working Group on WTDC Resolutions, Declaration and Thematic Priorities,contained in [DT/3 (Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG26-200616-TD-0003/en).

* Noting that the working groups would report the results of their work through their parent body, TDAG, it was important to clarify which TDAG meeting that would be. In order to produce timely results for WTDC‑21, it was agreed that a TDAG meeting would be convened before the end of 2020.
* In line with the ITU Convention, the draft agenda of WTDC-21 shall be prepared by the Director of BDT and submitted by the Secretary-General to the Council for approval, with the concurrence of a majority of the Member States.
* Regional initiatives or regional priorities? It was agreed to maintain regional initiatives as the expression is enshrined in the final reports of WTDC-14 and WTDC-17; and has become commonplace. The Working Group on WTDC Resolutions, Declaration and Thematic Priorities could review these expressions and make proposals.
* Partners or stakeholders? The term “partners” should be understood to mean “institutions, organizations, individuals, foundations, international banks,” who would join WTDC-21 in Addis Ababa because they have the expertise and required capital to implement many of the initiatives that would be presented, particularly on connectivity. In the end, it was agreed to use the term “stakeholders”.
* The working groups must be open to all ITU Member States and ITU-D Sector Members.
* Thematic priorities were discussed as a new concept for WTDC. It was noted that thematic priorities had been extensively reported on in the 2019 performance report to the TDAG-20 virtual meeting of 2 to 5 June 2020. It was agreed to rename them “ITU‑D thematic priorities” instead of “BDT thematic priorities”, as these priorities span the entire Development Sector. It was further agreed to add “thematic priorities” to the title of the second working group to read: “Working Group on WTDC Resolutions, Declaration and Thematic Priorities.”
* It was agreed to refer to WSIS Action lines in general and not single out Action Lines C2, C5 and C6, as ITU has work in more than these three Action Lines.

1. **Composition of the groups and working methods**

The working groups are open to all ITU Member States and ITU-D Sector Members. They may meet electronically, as required, and otherwise communicate electronically. They may meet during TDAG, normally not at the same time as another group.

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