|  |
| --- |
| C:\Users\comas\AppData\Local\Temp\Rar$DRa0.735\jpg\ITU official logo_blue_RGB.jpg**TDAG Working Group on WTDC Resolutions,Declaration and Thematic Priorities****15-16 September 2021, Virtual** |
|  |  |
|  | **Document TDAG-WG-RDTP/58-E** |
|  | **6 October 2021** |
|  | **Original: English** |
| **Source:** | Chairman, TDAG Working Group on WTDC Resolutions, Declaration and Thematic Priorities |
| **Title:** | Report of the 7th meeting of the TDAG Working Group on Resolutions, Declaration and Thematic Priorities, 15-16 September 2021 |

**Summary**

The TDAG Working Group on WTDC Resolutions, Declaration and Thematic Priorities (TDAG-WG-RDTP), held its seventh and final meeting on 15-16 September 2021, concluding its mandate which had been extended in May 2021 by the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG). This working group was open to all ITU Member States and ITU-D Sector Members and was chaired by Dr Ahmad Sharafat, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

1. **Opening of the meeting**

1.1 The Chairman recalled the group’s four-pronged mandate.

* To review WTDC resolutions, examine their number and subject matter, and consider streamlining, to avoid repetitions and duplication with the resolutions of the Plenipotentiary Conference. The streamlining should take into account that some Sector resolutions are integrations of Plenipotentiary Conference resolutions and therefore these resolutions should not be considered as repetition.
* To align the thematic priorities of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D), proposed regional initiatives and proposed study group Questions, taking into account proposals of ITU-D study groups, outcomes of the regional preparatory meetings for the forthcoming WTDC, relating to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and taking into consideration the WSIS Action Lines for which ITU has lead responsibility.
* To propose elements and make recommendations to ITU membership for the future draft Declaration.
* And, finally, to report its outcomes to TDAG, to be held on 12-18 November 2021.

**1.2 Ms Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)**, commended all members for their valuable contribution throughout the work of the group, despite the persistent COVID-19 pandemic. She extended special thanks to the Chairman for his steadfast thought leadership and his convening role throughout the process. “You have done a wonderful job in navigating us through this group's work,” Ms Bogdan-Martin said, acknowledging the following significant progress the group has made over the past six meetings:

* A preliminary draft of the Addis Ababa Declaration integrating inputs from most of the regional groups;
* A preliminary draft of the new Thematic Priority areas for consideration by the next TDAG meeting.

1.3 The Director also mentioned that the TDAG Working Group on Strategic and Operation Plan (TDAG-WG-SOP) had done more work on framing the draft Addis Ababa Action Plan with due consideration of inputs from TDAG-WG-RDTP. TDAG-WG-SOP has continued working to shape the ITU-D input to the new ITU strategic plan for 2024-2027 following TDAG-WG-RDTP guidance.

1.4 Ms Roxanne McElvane Webber (United States), Chairman of the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group, wished TDAG-WG-RDTP a successful meeting.

1. **Approval of the agenda**

2.1 The meeting approved the agenda in [Document 51(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.RDTP-C-0051/).

1. **Report of the previous meeting of TDAG-WG-RDTP**

3.1 The report of the sixth meeting, contained in [Document 49(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.RDTP-C-0049/), was approved.

1. **Thematic Priorities and Declaration**

**Thematic Priorities**

4.1 [Document 53(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.RDTP-C-0053/), a **revised proposal for ITU-D Thematic Priorities**, was introduced by the Chairman. TDAG-WG-RDTP reached at its fifth meeting in April 2021, consensus on the following four thematic priorities: **Connectivity;** **Digital Transformation**; **Enabling Environment**; and **Resource Mobilization and International Cooperation.** An additional proposed thematic priority **[Building confidence, trust and security in the use of ICTs]** is still on the table and in square brackets. Thematic priority areas are aimed at grouping related areas together for the sole purpose of building synergies, better coordination and achieving management efficiencies in the work of BDT. This is expected to result in optimal resource allocation and use. The supporting components within each of the thematic priority areas are expected to facilitate the implementation of work by BDT in the same way that programmes, in the past, have been used as an implementation tool for ITU-D activities, projects and initiatives.

4.2 Moreover, the proposed thematic priorities are intended to guide the framing of the ITU-D strategic plan objectives. The proposed supporting components would become outputs in the strategic plan. They will be finalized during the drafting of the action plan and the strategic plan, taking into account the outputs contained in the Buenos Aires Action Plan. The supporting components listed under each thematic priority are only examples.

**Comments from the floor**

4.3 Considering that the full title of [Document 53](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.RDTP-C-0053/) was “**Revised Proposal for ITU-D Thematic Priorities (WTDC) - four Thematic Priorities**” Saudi Arabia suggested that the word “four” be dropped until the matter is finalized either in TDAG or in WTDC. The Russian Federation agreeing, added that the report as drafted gives the impression that there will only be four thematic priorities.

4.4 Algeria, speaking on behalf of the African Group, commented that it is premature to say: “the proposed four Thematic Priorities will in essence become the ITU-D Strategic Plan Objectives” (see the third paragraph of [Document 53](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.RDTP-C-0053/)), underlining that it is up to TDAG-WG-SOP to make that call, based on the work being done by TDAG‑WG-RDTP.

**Way forward**

4.5 The meeting agreed to amend [Document 53](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.RDTP-C-0053/) to reflect the actual situation and to transmit it to TDAG with the proposed additional thematic priority **[Building confidence, trust and security in the use of ICTs]** in square brackets.

**Draft declaration**

4.6 The Chairman introduced [Document 52](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.RDTP-C-0052/) – **the draft Addis Ababa declaration** – highlighting that it had no square brackets and thanking delegates for their flexibility, understanding and cooperation in arriving at this remarkable achievement.

**Comments from the floor**

4.7 The Russian Federation stated that the text as it stands (i.e. with no square brackets) may give the impression that the entire group agrees with it, whereas some delegations still want to see some of the topics they proposed over several meetings included, for example radio frequencies.

4.8 The Chairman responded that while there had been a discussion on radio frequencies, the advice and guidance to the group was to develop a declaration that is concise, focused, and written in a way that is easily understood by people outside ITU. Moreover, work areas such as radio frequencies and assistance to developing countries in frequency management could be included in the action plan. This guidance had seemed satisfactory to those administrations seeking to add more topics.

4.9 The United States, speaking on behalf of the Inter-American Telecommunications Commission (CITEL), said that CITEL is still discussing the declaration, and concurred with the Chairman’s explanation of having the declaration as a high-level draft. CITEL has underlined in past meetings that the goal should be to have a high-level text that speaks to an external audience. CITEL, therefore, considers the current text a good draft, but also acknowledges that there will be certainly some other considerations by other members as WTDC draws near.

**Way forward**

4.10 Some delegations expressed the need to include in the current draft declaration some topics that had been mentioned over several meetings. The Chairman indicated that the current draft of the declaration was not the final draft as delegations could still submit proposals to the next TDAG and to the next WTDC.

1. **WTDC Resolutions**

**Revision to Resolution 1**

5.1 The Chairman introduced [Document DT/20](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.RDTP-210915-TD-0020/) – an 80-page compilation of membership proposals to revise Resolution 1 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of WTDC, on the rules of procedure of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau. The compilation was first displayed during the meeting of 30 June and 1 July 2021 as [TDAG-WG-RDTP/DT/14](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.RDTP-210915-TD-0014/), but there was only time to consider Section 1 of the resolution. [Document DT/20](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.RDTP-210915-TD-0020/) also contains the changes that were first agreed at that meeting, allowing TDAG-WG-RDTP to continue its review from where it stopped.

5.2 The United States, speaking on behalf of CITEL, stated that they are working on a regional proposal on Resolution 1 and preferred not to consider the proposed revisions line by line at this point.

5.3 Saudi Arabia, speaking as Chairman of the Arab Group for WTDC preparations, mentioned that Resolution 1 was still work in progress within his group and that it needed more time to complete its review. He called for a disclaimer to be put at the beginning of [Document DT/20](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.RDTP-210915-TD-0020/) that would state that participants in this meeting noted the progress made so far in different regions with regard to Resolution 1 and that they looked forward to discussing it further in TDAG.

5.4 The Chairman underlined that irrespective of whether TDAG-WG-RDTP considers this resolution or not, regional telecommunication organizations, or individual administrations have the right to propose further changes at TDAG or at WTDC itself.

5.5 TDAG-WG-RDTP then continued its work on Resolution 1 from Section 2, reviewing proposed revisions mainly from the Russian Federation, the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) and the Chairmen of ITU-D Study Groups 1 and 2. It agreed on most of the changes, while modifying some of the text.

**Way forward**

5.6 When discussing Resolution 1, it was noted that several regional telecommunication organizations had not completed their review and may wish to revisit certain provisions during TDAG or at WTDC itself. TDAG-WG-RDTP covered Resolution 1 to the extent that it could. There are square brackets that need to be discussed further.

**Revision to Resolution 2**

5.7 The Chairman presented his proposal contained in [Document 55](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.RDTP-C-0055/), entitled **“Revision to Study Topics in WTDC Resolution 2**,” with the aim of stimulating discussion. It puts forward the following ten topics, with each topic intended to be considered as a study Question.

5.8 According to this proposal, one study group would study:

* Deployment of broadband networks and services in urban, rural, and remote areas;
* Broadcasting networks and services;
* Access to telecommunication/ICT networks and services by persons with specific needs;
* Consumer protection, including conformance, interoperability, device authenticity, safeguarding user privacy and data, and cost of services;
* Emergency communications for mitigating pandemics and other disasters.

5.9 The other study group would study:

* Emerging technologies, applications, platforms and use cases (e.g. IoT, machine learning, OTTs, etc.);
* E-health;
* Cybersecurity;
* Protecting the environment (e-waste, ICT-enabled applications and services in other sectors, e.g. agriculture, etc.);
* Human exposure to electromagnetic fields with emphasis on bands above 2.5 GHz (5G/6G networks and services).

5.10 Zimbabwe presented its contribution in [Document 56](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.RDTP-C-0056/) entitled **“Modification of Proposals on Revision of Study Topics in WTDC Resolution 2”**. While welcoming the list of topics presented in [Document 55](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.RDTP-C-0055/), Zimbabwe proposed that should each of these topics stand as individual study Questions, the topic on “deployment of broadband networks and services in urban, rural, and remote areas” would have to be split into two in order to ensure that adequate attention is given to rural and remote areas.

5.11 Zimbabwe also stated that most of the 3.7 billion people who are still offline reside in rural and remote areas. Combining a study relating to urban areas with one relating to rural and remote areas may end up placing greater focus on connecting the remaining parts of urban areas, where there is commercial value, than on connecting rural and remote areas.

5.12 Zimbabwe further proposed the inclusion of “e-education” as a topic for the study groups in the same way that “e-health” has been proposed as a stand-alone topic. Across the world, education has suffered a set-back due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with many young people, particularly those from rural and remote areas, not having been able to attend school for much of 2020 and 2021.

**Comments and views from the floor**

5.13 The Russian Federation commented that it was premature to send [Document 55](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.RDTP-C-0055/) to ITU-D Study Groups; that the proposed topics should be more aligned with the needs of developing countries in order not to replicate the work of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU‑T); and that further discussion on the Chairman’s proposal could take place in TDAG.

5.14 Brazil, underlining the importance of the proposed topics, agreed with these comments. Brazil’s main concern is that on the one hand, reducing the number of Questions would result in efficiency gains, fewer meeting days and more participants. However, on the other hand, it would be a challenge to prioritize the scope of broad-ranging Questions. Brazil agreed with the proposal from Zimbabwe to make rural and remote communications a stand-alone topic, noting that CITEL is still having discussions on the different study topics —and this is one of them.

5.15 The United States, also agreeing with the previous speakers, highlighted the need to consider whether to adopt a top-down or a bottom-up approach when thinking about study Questions. In particular, the United States agreed with the proposal from Zimbabwe that given the importance of broadband deployment, rural and remote areas should be established as a stand-alone Question, and also agreed to look at e-education. The e‑health Question has been around for some time now. Certainly, with the pandemic, e‑health is important but perhaps looking at other e-applications would be something to consider in the Study Groups, regional groups, TDAG and beyond, the United States suggested.

5.16 The Chairman thanked Zimbabwe for its contribution and the delegates for their lively discussion. It was certainly very successful in stimulating discussion.

**Way forward**

5.17 As decided by TDAG, the extraordinary meetings of ITU-D Study Groups 1 and 2 to be held in October 2021, will discuss the revision of WTDC Resolution 2. The Chairman of TDAG-WG-RDTP will submit an information doc to the next SG meeting in October. The Study Groups will submit their conclusions directly to TDAG.

**Closing**

5.18 On behalf of the Director of BDT, Ms Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Mr Stephen Bereaux, Deputy to the Director of BDT and Chief of the Field Operations Coordination Department, congratulated Dr Sharafat for the remarkable progress made under his leadership and thanked him for the time and the very hard effort he has put into this group. Mr Bereaux then encouraged all delegates to participate in the **Road to Addis series** at a side event (20 September 2021) for the 76th United Nations General Assembly. The event was organized to formally launch the **Partner2Connect Digital Coalition** — a multistakeholder alliance to foster meaningful connectivity and digital transformation in the world’s hardest-to-connect countries, including those in least developed countries, land locked developing countries and small island developing States.

5.19 Ms Roxanne McElvane Webber thanked the Chairman for the mammoth task accomplished and congratulated him on the results achieved—all of which are good outcomes for WTDC-22. “We know that you are not actually done, but this group is. And so we will look forward to building on the good work that you have shepherded,” she said.

5.20 The Chairman, thanking Ms McElvane Webber for her kind words, said that he valued and treasured her leadership and encouragement throughout the group’s meetings. “You have always been present in our meetings, which is a great source of inspiration for all of us.” He thanked TDAG for the confidence placed in him and all delegates for their active participation. He extended special thanks to the secretariat for the tremendous work.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_