|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| C:\Users\comas\AppData\Local\Temp\Rar$DRa0.735\jpg\ITU official logo_blue_RGB.jpg**TDAG Working Group on WTDC Preparations**  **20 October 2020, Virtual** | | |
|  | | **Revision 2 to** |
|  | | **Document TDAG-WG-Prep/DT/6-E** |
|  | | **21 October 2020** |
|  | | **English only** |
| **Source:** | Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau | |
| **Title:** | Compilation of proposals to the TDAG Working Group on WTDC Preparations | |

**Summary**

This document contains the final report of the TDAG Working Group on WTDC Preparations, including proposals based on its terms of reference. The report is being submitted to TDAG-20/3 for consideration and endorsement of the proposals contained therein.

The TDAG Working Group on WTDC preparations was set up by TDAG at its meeting on 2-5 June 2020. The [terms of reference](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/TDAG/Pages/TDAG_WG_WTDC_Prep.aspx) were approved at a subsequent extraordinary TDAG meeting on 16 June 2020, which also appointed Mr Santiago Reyes-Borda (Canada) as Chairman of the Working Group on WTDC Preparations.

The group has held four meetings over July, September and October 2020 and has received twelve contributions from Member States and Sector Members that were presented and discussed at those meetings. The reports of the individual meetings are available as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 16 July 2020 – [TDAG-WG-Prep/4](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.WP-C-0004/en) | 30 September 2020 – [TDAG-WG-Prep/18](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.WP-C-0018/en) |
| 7 September 2020 – [TDAG-WG-Prep/12](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.WP-C-0012/en) | 20 October 2020 – TDAG-WG-Prep/xx |

This document, which was prepared in coordination with the Chairman of the Working Group, has kept the numbering of the original guiding questions, as presented in [TDAG-WG-Prep/DT/3](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.WP-200907-TD-0003/en).

**Introduction**

Throughout its meetings the group has stressed that WTDC should be an action-oriented conference, with interactive dialogues between stakeholders, aimed at developing a shared understanding of existing barriers and advancing effective, sustainable and innovative solutions for the expansion of meaningful connectivity for everyone, everywhere.

As so many have said, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the fundamental importance of telecommunications and information and communication technologies (ICTs) in all aspects of people's lives: health, education, work and entertainment. The economic impact of COVID-19 will affect the path to economic recovery for both developed and developing countries for years to come. Telecommunications and ICTs will play a critical part in this recovery. ITU, through its Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D), has the potential to play a pivotal role in bringing countries together to address the many challenges presented by the effects of the pandemic on the global economy.

Participants in the group believe that WTDC-21 offers an invaluable opportunity to put the critical work of ITU-D at the centre of the effort to ensure that all people in all countries have access to affordable, high-quality broadband. In this sense, the preparatory process, structure and content of WTDC must be designed to ensure that no one is left behind.

**Action required**

The following are the recommendations made by the working group to TDAG on the matters set out in its terms of reference, based on the membership contributions submitted to the meetings of the working group. All membership proposals submitted to the meetings of the working group are provided here for review and decision by the working group at its last meeting.

**Section I: Preparatory process**

|  |
| --- |
| * **To review WTDC preliminary proposals on WTDC-21 preparatory process including responses to the BDT survey on WTDC reform that was discussed during the two TDAG web dialogues, as well as any other related member contributions to TDAG-20 virtual meeting on WTDC;** |
| -- |

|  |
| --- |
| * **In consultation with ITU membership and the TDAG Bureau, make recommendations for arrangements with preparatory meetings and events prior to the conference;** |
| 1. **How many interregional coordination meetings (IRMs) should be held and when?**   The Working Group recommends a minimum of two and a maximum of three Inter-regional Meetings.  The Working group recommends that the IRMs be held back-to-back with RPMs, subject to further discussion among the RTOs, in consultation and coordination with the BDT.   1. **What should be the format of IRMs?**   IRMs should, to the extent possible, facilitate in person and remote participation, on an equal footing, and should seek to come to a common position on key issues to be discussed at WTDC-21, while respecting the sovereign right of any Member State to submit its own contributions to WTDC-21.   1. **What should the IRM agenda include?**   The agenda should be built around the proposals from RPMs, and also include proposals from Member States, Sector Members, RTOs, BDT and other stakeholders, as appropriate, covering key topics that need coordination and consensus between the different regions.   1. **Should attendance at IRMs be limited, and if so, how many representatives from each region should attend IRMs?**   [In addition to the regional telecommunication organization (RTO) focal points, IRMs should be open to all interested ITU-D members in order to promote transparency, inclusion and a full exchange of views. The option to participate virtually could support broader participation.  IRMs should be limited to the coordinators nominated by RTOs.]   1. **How will the chairmanship of IRMs be decided?**   There should be one overall chairman, preferably the chairman of WTDC-21, and two vice-chairmen, preferably the chairmen of the RPMs taking place back-to-back with the IRM.  [To foster inclusivity across the regions, consideration for these positions should include the WTDC host country and Chairmen of the TDAG working groups, RTO focal points and TDAG vice-chairmen, taking into account regional and gender balance.]   1. **What steps should be taken to ensure proper planning and coordination between RPMs, IRMs and RTO preparatory meetings?**   Best practice (in terms of preparations) from other ITU conferences shall be incorporated into the planning and work of IRMs.  With regard to coordination between RPMs and IRMs and RTOs: each region would appoint its coordinators, while the secretariat of the RTOs would be allowed to play an overall coordinating role.  The regional preparatory process should focus on defining regional priorities/initiatives, revising or drafting time-consuming resolutions, addressing study groups and study Questions related matters and developing guidelines and text for the Declaration.  **9. How should WTDC-21 be promoted?**  TDAG-20/3 is encouraged to identify the proper mechanism to promote the WTDC-21 among ITU membership, within the UN System, international financial institutions, and all relevant stakeholders.  **10. Which other high-profile forums can be used to raise awareness and interest on WTDC, and how should ITU go about doing this?**  Please refer to previous section. |

**Section II: Conference arrangements, including content, thematic tracks, themes and stakeholders**

|  |
| --- |
| * **To develop proposals and make recommendations that might enhance the arrangements for the conference, including:** |
| **- Conference content;**  **- Consider the Thematic Tracks**  **10. Should the High-Level Segment be changed, and if so, what form should it take?**  10.1 Any High-Level Segments should not take time from the work of WTDC Plenary and committees and their related groups. – **Russian Federation**  10.2 Minimize side events or merge the High-Level Segment with side events in order to make WTDC more efficient, effective and focused on the development issues of telecommunications/ICTs. – **Indonesia**  10.3 Merge the High-Level Segment and the side events to create panel sessions. In the current WTDC set-up, side events held during tea breaks, lunch breaks and after conference hours are not well-attended. BDT and Member States are aware of the real development issues that WTDC needs to deal with and should come up with a list of critical topics that can have an impact on development and on which panel discussions can be held during normal conference time. Speakers can include industry experts, consumers, different community representatives and policy-makers. – **Zimbabwe**  Participation of policy-makers will obviate the need for a monotonous delivery of policy statements. However, to make sure that the story of development continues to be told at WTDC, which helps BDT keep track on developments across the world, Member States and Sector Members can submit written policy statements, which are then published on the WTDC website. – **Zimbabwe**  10.4 The High-Level Segment and high-level policy statements could make way for a Development Track that would incorporate senior level panels, roundtables and thematic discussions of development topics related to the implementation of the Action Plan and establishment of the new Action Plan. The thematic or development track should be separate from the administrative aspects of the conference, yet also incorporated into the work of WTDC-21, in that it would be designed to help identify challenges and priorities of the membership, and provide roadmaps towards solutions and partnerships. Ideally, these dialogues could lead to tangible actions and innovative approaches around designated themes for BDT’s future work. This “Development track” could have a duration of 2-3 days and be integrated into the conference, being held within the first days of WTDC-21. **–*multi-country proposal from*** **Argentina, Brazil, Canada and the United States | Same proposal from the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL), except for the additional sentence highlighted in blue from CITEL.**  10.5 It would thus be beneficial to identify a common topic or theme under which the activities planned for the High-Level Segment and parallel events, if any, are included. This does not mean that parallel events cannot be developed on other topics, but it does mean that a “thematic backbone” for the parallel events should be determined based on a convening or overarching theme. Such themes also should be connected to ITU-D thematic priorities and the regional priorities identified by members. ***–multi-country proposal from* Argentina, Brazil, Canada and the United States| Same proposal from the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL)**  10.6 In this sense, it may be useful if the high-level speakers from Member States and other stakeholders are engaged in helping to refine thematic panels, workshops or even in any parallel event (if agreed) to reflect their own expertise and experiences. Taking into account the historical number of speakers, it is very much likely that some of the thematic sessions may be dedicated exclusively to High-Level Segment speakers. **Priority should be given to ensuring that the High-Level Segment does not occupy the time of the conference itself, and that from day one the conference starts working on the topics of its agenda.** Thematic events should be oriented towards advancing the work of the conference. The development track also should aim to conclude after two to three days to maximize senior level participation and attendance. ***–multi-country proposal from*** **Argentina, Brazil, Canada and the United States | Same proposal from the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL)**  10.7 For organizational purposes, the deadline to register representatives to the High-Level Segment must be determined well in advance and enforced. This will allow BDT to sort out the space in which each member will speak (with the possibility of new arrangements, as appropriate). Another suggestion is to give Member States and other stakeholders the opportunity to choose in which session they will participate, with due consideration to regional and gender balance in each session. ***–multi-country proposal from*** **Argentina, Brazil, Canada and the United States. |** **Same proposal from the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL)**  10.8 It is also possible to think about a roundtable format, where senior officials from Member States share a panel with representatives or high-level officials from other stakeholders, especially donor institutions. It would be expected that from the different deliberations, proposals for development projects would be identified, taking into account the regional priorities, in which the role of each stakeholder is determined, as well as the funding source and a future work plan. –***multi-country proposal from*** **Argentina, Brazil, Canada and the United States |** **Same proposal from the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL)**  10.9 The High-Level Segment can be changed to become more interactive, and involve different stakeholders. The first day of the conference can be assigned to the High-Level Segment, which could be in the form of a panel discussion that includes the high-level participants attending the conference. Topics of discussion would be decided beforehand. Policy statements may be recorded and run on screens in the conference venue as well as on the WTDC online portal. – **Egypt**  10.10 Members could consider options such as policy statements being recorded and presented on screens in the conference venue, as well as on the WTDC online portal, and written statements being made available on the WTDC website or other methods to be determined. – **Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL)**  10.11 Support is hereby expressed for the suggestion that policy statements could be pre-recorded and run on screens in the conference venue and on the WTDC online portal. **– AT&T**  10.12 Noting the time constraints experienced during WTDC-17, support is hereby expressed for the suggestion in BDT’s concept note to repurpose the High-Level Segment of the conference and side-events into a “Partnership Segment”. An important element in achieving any action plan developed at the conference is the ability to leverage and secure funding commitments to turn these plans into reality. Given the current global recession due to COVID-19, there is likely to be increased demand for funding and increased pressure on donors, both national and institutional, further emphasizing the importance of developing clear, achievable goals with clear outcomes for both donors and recipients.  Merging the High-Level Segment of the conference and side-events into a “Partnership Segment” will provide opportunities for interaction between stakeholders in the ITU Development Sector, including Member States, Sector Members, Academia, as well as non-governmental organizations and financial institutions and development banks to discuss relevant thematic issues and how to generate development projects that can effectively target particular areas of need.  These should be structured in such a way that stakeholders will be able to engage and collaborate during or after the conference to secure funding and create new development projects and initiatives as a result of these discussions. – ***joint proposal from* Australia and Samoa**  10.13 “High-Level Segment”/“Development Track”: A refresh of the High-Level Segment and policy statements into a “Development Track” featuring roundtables and panels would enable senior-level representatives from Member States and other stakeholder groups to engage in interactive discussions around the most pressing issues related to telecommunication/ICTs and development and share lessons learned and best practices. This approach may help draw more senior-level representatives from the private sector and other organizations as compared to the current format. Given that high-level government officials most likely would attend the opening ceremony, holding the Development Track in the first two to three days of the conference may help ensure their participation. In addition, the time management plan should also take into account that the administrative work should begin on the first day of the conference. **– AT&T**  10.14 Rethinking the High-Level Segment: Ensuring there is room for high-level speakers to participate is important, but a change of format from a series of set-piece speeches, one after another, is needed. It is proposed that these speakers be engaged in conversations with one another through panels, or roundtable discussions, around key themes and subjects related to the digital divide, with the objective of increasing the political will and commitment to bridging it. Ensuring a mixture of perspectives in these debates is also important, so this proposal supports efforts to ensure panels with high-level participants also incorporate others. It also agrees with the ideas proposed by, inter alia, Argentina, Brazil, Canada and the United States of America in Document [TDAG-WG-Prep/16](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27.WP-C-0016/en), of 20 September 2020, in this respect (also reproduced in 10.4 to 10.8 above). Support is also hereby expressed for the approach articulated in paragraph 11.4 below under “What theme or themes (connected to development challenges and membership priorities) should be established for WTDC-21, and how should the theme(s) be connected to the content and structure of the conference?” **– *multi-country proposal from*** **the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic and Lithuania**  **Agreed by TDAG-WG-Prep**  xxx  **12. Submit proposals for thematic tracks that can be incorporated into the conference**  12.1 One proposal could be to explain the linkages between thematic priorities, ITU-D Action plan, WTDC resolutions, BDT programmes and ITU-D study group Questions. – **Russian Federation**  12.2 Innovation that assists in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), demand stimulation initiatives, ICT capacity building for disadvantaged communities, implementation of ICT technical skill resource training and investment in ICT infrastructure. – **Zimbabwe**  12.3 Thematic tracks should reflect the BDT themes. – ***joint proposal from* Australia and Samoa**  **Agreed by TDAG-WG-Prep**  xxx  **- Determination of conference theme(s);**  **11. What theme or themes (connected to development challenges and membership priorities) should be established for WTDC-21, and how should the theme(s) be connected to the content and structure of the conference?**  11.1 The agenda of side events should have a strong connection with the study group Questions, ITU index and BDT activities. Each side event should have a clear explanation on how it contributes to the study group Questions, ITU index and/or BDT activities, preferably with outputs which can be transposed to the concrete benefit or inputs to WTDC resolutions and mandates of study group Questions.  An additional side event could be held with the aim of strengthening the capacity of ITU members to express their opinions and transform them into contributions for the next ITU-D study period. – **Russian Federation**  11.2 The themes for WTDC-21 should be holistic enough to encompass the focus of telecommunication development issues arising from all regions. In addition, bearing in mind the current global health crisis, the themes could be along the following lines:  Alternative 1: Creating a resilient global digital economy to withstand global pandemics/crises/disasters.  Alternative 2: Recovery of Global Digital Economy and Connectivity to Build Back Better. – **Indonesia**  11.3 **Building Back Better: Bridging the Digital Divide** is proposedas the overall theme for WTDC-21. There is no more important contribution that WTDC can make than to bring the development agencies, ITU members and stakeholders, and financial institutions together to take stock of what is required to finally meet the challenge of ensuring affordable connectivity for all people, everywhere and to collaborate on action. ITU is uniquely placed, as the international organization dedicated to telecommunications, to be at the centre of this effort. The pandemic has made starkly clear that people without fast, affordable connectivity are at a very significant disadvantage compared to those who are well-connected. We cannot allow those left behind to get further behind; on the contrary, we need to ensure they can catch up. *–****joint proposal from the*** **United Kingdom and Lithuania| *The theme is reiterated as multi-country proposal from*** **the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic and Lithuania**  11.4 The theme should focus on promoting universal, secure, affordable connectivity and connecting the unconnected, with due consideration to the role of telecommunication/ICT connectivity in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and addressing the uptake of ICTs/digital inclusion, including the particular needs of developing countries and vulnerable sectors (indigenous populations, women, the elderly, and so on). In the light of COVID-19, the conference could focus on related experiences, challenges and opportunities and address its impact on advancing telecommunication/ICT connectivity. Stemming from this overarching theme, panels could elaborate upon certain areas such as rural infrastructure development, collaborative policy-making, digital inclusion, barriers to adoption and deployment of telecommunications/ICTs, or an exchange among donor agencies regarding ways to better attract funding and investment. –***multi-country proposal from* Argentina, Brazil, Canada and the United States |** **Same proposal from the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL), with the additional text highlighted in blue from CITEL**  11.5 Suggested themes could include: **“The digital economy as a pathway to prosperity” and “Fighting COVID-19 together: an inclusive and inter-connected future for all.”** The unprecedented challenge of the current pandemic emphasizes the need for unity and for countries to come together to help meet the challenge, and places ITU-D at the centre of the long-term solution given the opportunities afforded by the digital economy during the COVID era, and of course the importance of leaving no vulnerable or underserved groups or regions behind.Under these suggested themes, the conference could examine how to translate the unexpected benefits of the pandemic to the telecommunication/ICT sector, and potentially to individuals and communities through virtual access to services and forums previously constrained by lack of resources, as well as to developing particular solutions for the most vulnerable countries, regions and groups that would benefit the most from increased connectivity. At the very core of everything is connectivity – without focusing first on connectivity, the benefits of advances in telecommunications/ICTs cannot be realized for all and many risk being left further behind. – ***joint proposal from* Australia and Samoa**  **Agreed by TDAG-WG-Prep**  xxx  **- Key stakeholders;**   1. **What constituent groups should be targeted for WTDC-21?**   7.1 International financial institutions (the World Bank, regional development banks, including recent newcomers) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee, especially on relevant discussions of financing ICT development, statistics and ITU outreach. In this regard, participation of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and of the contributors to the 2018 Survey on Donor Support to the Digital Economy in Developing Countries would be desirable. – **Russian Federation**  7.2 ITU should elaborate a visibility and awareness promotion strategy in cooperation with members, who will provide proposals and participate actively in its implementation. – **Lithuania**  7.3 Private-sector stakeholders balanced across major relevant industry sectors – any session or activity organized during a private sector event should be considered as a platform for the ICT sector as a whole in line with the overarching objective of promoting connectivity for all. – **ESOA**  7.4 Policy-makers and regulatory authorities, as well as:   * financial institutions: they play a big role in funding projects and should be part of the delegation of the Member State in which they are based; * development and donor organizations: they assist in assessing the areas that require intervention with regard to connectivity and development issues; * gender groups and youth: they can highlight the challenges faced by their constituents and propose innovations that can provide solutions for the development of ICTs; * manufacturers of ICT equipment and gadgets so that they have a clear understanding of what products they need to produce to support ICT development: these entities too should participate under the banner of Member State; * Academia: they can ensure that education requirements in ICT skills are catered for. – **Zimbabwe**   7.5 As agreed during the web dialogues, WTDC needs to attract new and more diverse participants from the private sector and potential donors. In this sense, institutions such as the World Bank, Regional Development Banks, civil society organizations, representatives from marginalized communities, UN Women, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and others may be involved in the preparatory process, as appropriate, and assume specific roles during the conference. –***multi-country proposal from*** **Argentina, Brazil, Canada and the United States| Same proposal from the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL)**  7.6 WTDC needs to attract new and more diverse participants from the private sector and the broader donor community such as the key international financial institutions, the academic community and other UN development agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).– ***joint proposal from* Australia and Samoa**  7.7 It is fundamental to ensure that stakeholders concerned with the issue of bridging the digital divide feel welcome and that there is a place for them at WTDC. This is especially true where they have not participated in WTDC before. Examples include, but are not limited to, regional development banks, the Bretton Woods institutions, foundations and charitable organizations dedicated to reducing the digital divide, UN agencies such as UN Women, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the UN regional development organizations such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and those with special expertise in providing connectivity to remote, rural, or otherwise underserved populations. This proposal supports efforts to ensure these non-traditional stakeholders see WTDC as a place where they can work together, as well as with the members of the Union, on the practical application of the Union’s objectives related to the digital divide. **– *multi-country proposal from*** **the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic and Lithuania**  **Agreed by TDAG-WG-Prep**  xxx  **12. What high-level participants should be invited to chair and/or deliver keynote speeches on the theme(s) selected?**  12.1 High-level participants from Member States, Sector Members, Academia and from international and regional financial or funding organizations. – **Indonesia**  12.2 It would be important to identify a list of special guests, including a short list of "top or star guests." If the focus is on action-oriented dialogues, experts with operational/execution experience should be considered. These guests could lead specific sessions within the conference agenda, on topics such as financing of ICT development projects, operation of development agencies and banks and methodology to access their credit lines. –***multi-country proposal from* Argentina, Brazil, Canada and the United States |Same proposal from the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL)**  12.3 Senior office-bearers of other UN development agencies and international financial institutions, as well as government representatives and senior officials from least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing States (SIDS) and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) should be given priority on the conference speakers list. In addition, key private-sector partners such as heads of multi-national telecommunication companies should also be invited/selected to encourage and reinforce the partnership focus.– ***joint proposal from* Australia and Samoa**  **Agreed by TDAG-WG-Prep**  xxx |

|  |
| --- |
| * **To report to the next meeting of TDAG.** |
| TDAG is invited to consider this report and to endorse the recommendations set out therein. |

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