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| **Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG)**  **31st Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 20-23 May 2024** | A close up of a sign  Description automatically generated |
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|  | **Document** **TDAG-2****4/41-E** |
|  | **8 May 2024** |
|  | **English only** |
| Australia, Canada, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Vanuatu | |
| Proposed response to the to the CWG FHR’s Liaison Statement  on the criteria for establishing future area offices | |
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| **Summary:**  This Contribution summarises the recent discussions on the matter of criteria for establishing future area offices and proposes a draft response from TDAG to CWG-FHR’s Liaison Statement.  **Action required:**  TDAG is invited to consider this contribution to inform a response from TDAG to the CWG‑FHR’s Liaison Statement on the criteria for establishing future area offices.  **References:**   * [TDAG-24/21](https://www.itu.int/md/D22-TDAG31-C-0021/en) (Rev.1) - Incoming LS - Liaison Statement to TDAG and ISCG on the criteria for establishing future area offices * [CWG-FHR-16/10](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CWGFHR16-C-0010/en) - Strengthening the Regional Presence - Criteria for Establishing Future Area Offices, submitted by the Secretariat * [CWG-FHR-16/24(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CWGFHR16-C-0024/en) - Multi-country contribution - The Proposal for Establishing Future Area Offices from Algeria, China, Cuba, Russian Federation and South Africa * [Resolution 25](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-025-E.pdf) (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) Strengthening the ITU Regional Presence * [Resolution 71](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-071-E.pdf) (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) ITU Strategic Plan 2024-2027 * [Decision 5](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/DEC-005-E.pdf) (Rev. Bucharest, 2022), Annex 2 Measures for improving ITU’s efficiency and reducing its expenses * [Document C20/74](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0074/en) Review of ITU Regional Presence – Report by PwC (2020) | |

1. **Introduction**

At the 2023 ordinary session of ITU Council, the Council tasked the Council Working Group on Financial and Human Resources (CWG-FHR) with recommending explicit criteria to guide future deliberations on establishing regional and area offices. This was done in light of the ongoing discussions on strategic approach to strengthening ITU regional presence and addressing existing gaps to ensure all ITU Members’ needs are adequately supported.

To assist CWG-FHR with this tasking, the ITU Secretariat submitted a contribution to the CWG‑FHR meeting in October 2023 proposing criteria to guide ITU in establishing future regional and area offices. The contribution drew on recommendations provided by PwC’s report on ITU’s Regional Presence (2020) and the subsequent deliberations by the Member States.

The submitters of this contribution would like to thank CWG-FHR for its consultative and inclusive approach and for seeking input from TDAG and Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) on this matter.

1. **Discussion**

The contribution from the ITU Secretariat outlines the process of assessing and evaluating potential expansion of ITU regional presence. Overall, it provides ITU with a step-by-step guidance and tools (a set of criteria to assist with necessary assessment at each step) to evaluate how to strengthen the ITU regional presence in a strategic and objective manner. The proposed criteria also aligns with the multi-country contribution (MCP) ([CWG-FHR-16/24(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CWGFHR16-C-0024/en)), which emphasises the importance of a comprehensive assessment of needs and capabilities (including human and financial resourcing) of ITU, Member States and other stakeholders when considering strengthening ITU regional presence.

Valuable discussions held at the CWG-FHR meetings in late 2023 and early 2024 have once again highlighted the topicality of the issue and pointed to additional aspects to be considered when deliberating on the establishment of regional and area offices. As outlined in the MCP ([CWG-FHR-16/24(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CWGFHR16-C-0024/en)), “the main purpose for establishment of area offices is to provide better services to Member States which are in need of assistance”.

1. **Proposal**

To progress the work of ITU on the meaningful assistance to all ITU Member States, with particular focus on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), this contribution invites TDAG to consider and approve the following draft response to Council in response to CWG-FHR Liaison Statement:

* TDAG would like to thank CWG-FHR for its Liaison Statement and welcomes the documents submitted for its consideration.
* TDAG supports the criteria outlined in document [CWG-FHR-16/10](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CWGFHR16-C-0010/en) and considerations presented in [CWG-FHR-16/24(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CWGFHR16-C-0024/en) to be submitted for the upcoming ordinary meeting of Council in June 2024.
* TDAG notes that the proposed criteria will only be used to determine the need for **future** area or regional offices. There is no expectation or obligation for the existing offices to align with the proposed criteria.
* TDAG notes that any decision about strengthening ITU regional presence should take ITU’s resourcing constraints and the sustainability of the regional presence into account.
* TDAG advises that given specific and diverse needs of LDSs, LLDCs and SIDs as well as previous ITU experience showing that “area office can be established either in countries where ICT is not well developed, or in countries where ICT is relatively developed in the area” ([CWG-FHR-16/24(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CWGFHR16-C-0024/en)), developing specific indicators for each proposed criterion would be counter-productive as it will risk limiting ITU’s ability to respond effectively to the specific needs and unique circumstances of the Member States it serves.

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