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| **Agenda item: PL 3.3** | **Document C18/25-E** |
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| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| STRENGTHENING THE REGIONAL PRESENCE | |

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| Summary  The purpose of this document is to report on the implementation of Resolution 25 (Rev. Busan, 2014). [Document C18/INF/6](https://www.itu.int/md/S18-CL-INF-0006/en) contains six annexes in relation to this document.  Action required  The Council is invited to **note** this report.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  References  [*Resolution 25 (Rev. Busan, 2014)*](http://www.itu.int/pub/S-CONF-PLEN-2015)*;*  *2017 Council document* [*C17/INF/12*](http://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-INF-0012/en) |

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# 1 Background

1.1 Revised Resolution 25 (Strengthening the regional presence) approved at PP-14 emphasizes the important role of regional and area offices in the preparation and implementation of the strategic plan and in meeting the diverse requirements of ITU membership. Resolution 25 instructs the Secretary General of ITU to submit each year to the Council a report on the regional presence. This document provides an update to the similar document submitted to Council 2017 ([document C17/25](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-C-0025/en)) with the developments and activities during 2017.

1.2 Further efforts were made during 2017 to enhance ITU’s regional presence through a range of measures to enable the Union to be more responsive to the specific needs of the regions and to effectively deliver timely and high quality products and services at country and regional levels.

1.3 This report provides information on the action plan and regional initiatives’ implementation. It also provides detailed information on the 2017 budget implementation for regular and extra-budgetary sources of funding. It also offers updated information on the staffing level of the various regional and area offices as well as other operational information, such as fellowships, experts and internal expert missions. The current document is supplemented by Information [Document C18/INF/6](https://www.itu.int/md/S18-CL-INF-0006/en) that contains the following annexes:

* Annex 1 Summary of the 2017 operational plan and projects implementation level and summary of the 2017 Regional and Area offices expenditure
* Annex 2 2017 operational plan implementation level by region and objective
* Annex 3 Breakdown of the 2017 regional and area offices expenditure by category of expenditure
* Annex 4 2017 Fellowships awarded and recruited experts
* Annex 5 Summary of staffing level by Regional and Area offices
* Annex 6 Breakdown of staffing level by Regional and Area offices

1.4 In addition, Resolution 25 of PP-14 requested in its Annex that a survey be organized once every four years of the level of satisfaction of Member States, Sector Members, and regional telecommunication organizations with ITU’s regional presence. According to Annex to Resolution 25, “the Council should then consider the appropriate course of action to be taken, with a view to reporting to the 2018 plenipotentiary conference on the matter”.

1.5 It is recalled that such survey was undertaken in 2016 and its results and a report were presented to the Council at its 2017 session (document [C17/INF/12](http://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-INF-0012/en)). Council 2017 noted document C17/25 (Strengthening the regional presence), which refers to the satisfaction survey described in Document C17/INF/12. ITU received 129 responses, of which 88 were from Member States and 41 were from Sector Members, Associates, regional organizations, and international organizations. The overall results were generally satisfactory for the all the aspects of the survey. The vast majority of the participants to the survey have indicated that the location of Regional and Area offices are appropriate, and that they were familiar with the activities of the ITU including at the regional level. The majority of the participants to the survey have also indicated that they were considering the staffing level of the Regional and Area offices appropriate.

### 2. Achievements at regional level (operational plan, regional initiatives, and projects)

2.1 The implementation of the regional initiatives and the execution of programmes, projects, and activities are carried out in the field under the leadership of regional and area offices. The main results achieved are regularly reported to TDAG and the Council. They can also be found in the Quarterly Reports, which were introduced by the Bureau in 2013 to set forth details on the implementation of the strategic, financial, and operational plans, including at regional level. Quarterly reports can be found at the following address: <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Pages/OperationalPlansPerformanceReports.aspx>

2.2 The 2017 ITU-D performance report provides all details concerning the contribution of the regional and area offices on the implementation of the strategic and operational plans of the ITU-D for the year 2017. The performance report can be found at the following address: <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/TIES_Protected/PerfReport2017.pdf>

2.3 In 2017, the implementation of the BDT operational plan (regular budget) included 239 actions for a total implementation level of 2.4 million CHF (Table 1). The implementation level of technical cooperation projects amounted to 9.4 million USD for 48 projects (Table 2).[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Table 1. Implementation of BDT operational plan in 2017**

*(amounts in thousands of Swiss francs (CHF))*



**Table 2. Implementation of projects in 2017**

*(amounts in thousands of US Dollars (USD))*



#### 2.4 Africa region

2.4.1 In 2017, BDT implemented project activities under 13 technical cooperation projects for a total amount of about 3 million CHF in the Africa region, in collaboration with Member States. In addition, activities on 48 actions were implemented for an amount of 597,000 CHF.

2.4.2 ITU provided support to the Africa Telecommunications Union (ATU) in organizing the preparatory meetings to build African common positions to the WTDC and WRC. ITU facilitated the harmonization of policies and regulatory frameworks in the region that includes universalization of broadband, e-Health using mobile devices, and regional and sub-regional IXP to provide cost reduction of traffic. Assistance was provided to countries in the region in various areas, including the model national broadband plans, development of digital economy policies, development of strategies and corporate strategic plan for institutions, etc.

2.4.3 A number of projects are currently ongoing in such areas as institutional reform, telemedicine, wireless broadband, judiciary training, CIRT implementation and enhancement, m-diabetes, and m-cervical cancer. Several regional workshops and forums were organized in 2017 in the region in such areas as conformance and interoperability, IPV6, cybersecurity and CyberDrill, IOT, ICT economics and finance, quality of service and quality of experience, international roaming, and ICT accessibility and digital inclusion. Several national workshops were organized on such subject as spectrum management, ICT measurements and indicators, CIRT management, ICT skills train of trainers, COP, cybersecurity maturity review and strategy, crisis management plan, judiciary training, and QoS and QoE.

#### 2.5 Americas region

2.5.1 In 2017, BDT implemented project activities under 11 technical cooperation projects for a total amount of about 3.8 million CHF in the Americas region, in collaboration with Member States. In addition, activities on 32 actions were implemented for an amount of 649,000 CHF.

2.5.2 Direct assistance and support was provided to different countries in the region in areas of policy and regulatory framework for an e-waste management, development of national ICT plans, preparation of guidelines for transition from analogue to digital broadcasting, infrastructure deployment, web accessibility training, etc. An online training on innovative communication tools for the inclusion and strengthening of indigenous people was delivered to over 150 indigenous people from 16 countries.

2.5.3 Several regional workshops and forums on conformance and interoperability, internet governance, cyber bullying, ICT accessibility and digital inclusion, cybersecurity and CyberDrill, emergency telecommunications and IOT were organized/delivered in 2017 in the Americas region. A number of online courses through ITU Academy were delivered on relevant issues, such as radioelectric spectrum, the role of ICTs in smart and sustainable cities, optical and NGN networks, regulation of spectrum and telecommunications services, etc. A pilot project on the establishment of an Alternate Regional Emergency Telecommunications Network in the Americas Region was prepared as a result of the joint effort of ITU, CITEL and COMTELCA. A conformity and interoperability assessment study was conducted with the main objective of creating proposals on ways forward to improve the C&I status in the region.

#### 2.6 Arab States region

2.6.1 In 2017, BDT implemented project activities under eight technical cooperation projects for a total amount of 860,000 CHF in the Arab States region, in collaboration with Member States. In addition, activities on 32 actions were implemented for an amount of 369,000 CHF.

2.6.2 Through the ITU Arab CoEs Network, ten capacity building courses were implemented in different aspects of ICTs applications and services, and more than 250 participants were trained. A cooperation agreement was signed with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) represented by the Employment Promotion Project (EPP) for the organization of “Girls in ICT Day Events” until 2019. Assistance was provided to the Arab Incubators and Technoparks Network (ARTECNET), and a study was conducted on broadband networks and IXPs development.

2.6.3 Capacity-building activities on IoT, Smart cities development, ICTs and Climate Change, and ICTs for Disaster Management were organized in the Arab States Region. Direct assistance was provided to Palestine, Somalia, and Sudan on mobile number portability, national numbering, and appraisal systems, respectively. Furthermore, capacity-building assistance was provided to countries in the area of spectrum management and frequency coordination. Efforts were continued in relation to cyber security through annual regional summit and annual regional Cyber Drills as well as child online protection activities. ICT Accessibility was promoted regionally through the organization of Regional ICT Accessibility Week.

#### 2.7 Asia and the Pacific region

2.7.1 In 2017, BDT implemented project activities under 14 technical cooperation projects for a total amount of about 1.4 million CHF in the Asia and the Pacific region, in collaboration with Member States. In addition, activities on 40 actions were implemented for an amount of 371,000 CHF.

2.7.2 The key emphasis was on capacity building and specialized assistances in the areas of spectrum management and developing spectrum monitoring plans, policy and regulatory frameworks, cybersecurity and child online protection, broadband, conformance, interoperability and type approvals, broadcasting, ICT applications, converged licensing, quality of service, ICT Indicators and Statistics, Internet of Things, internet exchange, content delivery network interconnection and the implementation of IPv6, ICTs for promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, ICTs for the empowerment of women, e-governance, smart and sustainable cities, e-agriculture, and other technical and regulatory assistances.

2.7.3 In the area of training, emphasis continued to focus on smart sustainable technologies, e-applications, cloud computing, IPv6 infrastructure security and transition, internet exchange points, cybersecurity and child online protection, ICT indicators and statistics, broadband technologies and roadmaps, conformity and interoperability, Internet of Things, spectrum economics, monitoring and automation tools (SMS4DC), preparing for international conferences, developing e-strategies (agriculture, health, postal service, telecommunication), cost modelling for wholesale, retail and mobile networks, and broadcasting, among others.

#### 2.8 CIS region

2.8.1 In 2017, BDT implemented activities on 19 actions for an amount of 231,000 CHF.

2.8.2 All five WTDC-14 Regional Initiatives were implemented. Major outputs of CIS Regional Initiatives in 2017 were Internet Access and Training Centre for persons with hearing disabilities in Vitebsk, Republic of Belarus (five working places) and the software that helps to select the most feasible solution for broadband deployment in all cities and settlements in CIS and Georgia (<https://broadbandcalculator.online>), among others.

2.8.3 Following demand from ITU membership in the CIS region, areas of capacity-building activities and regional discussions in 2017 included innovation, spectrum management and broadcasting, smart sustainable cities, future networks, IoT, digital financial services, policy and regulation and cybersecurity. Throughout the year, 18 regional events were organized, attracting around 1,170 participants in total from more than 30 countries. Technical assistance was provided to address requests from ITU Member States in the region in areas of: training of informatics teachers in rural areas; improvement of remote education facilities for capacity building; research on best practices of regulation; and expert assessment of broadband tariff methodology, among others.

#### 2.9 Europe region

2.9.1 In 2017, BDT implemented project activities under two technical cooperation projects for a total amount of 415,000 CHF in the Europe region, in collaboration with Member States. In addition, activities on 16 actions were implemented for an amount of 223,000 CHF.

2.9.2 Efforts to strengthen the implementation mechanism for the region were continued, including coordination of actions with diverse relevant organizations in the region, such as CEPT, EU, EC, ECO, ENISA, Regional Cooperation Council, ICPE and the UN, including UN ECE, R-UNDG, UNIDO, UNCTAD, WHO and FAO, as well as some UN country teams. Throughout the year, more than 21 workshops, seminars, expert group meetings on broadcasting, broadband, accessibility, cybersecurity, innovation, ICT for energy and electromagnetic field in the context of 5G roll-out, and human capacity building were organized, attracting more than 2,100 participants in total from more than 35 countries. In addition, human capacity of more than 400 professionals was built through the European Network of Centers of Excellence (CoEs) that offered 25 training opportunities.

2.9.3 Assistance was provided to Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Cyprus, Poland, FYR Macedonia, and Serbia in the fields of innovation, broadcasting, broadband, cybersecurity, ICT applications, and elaboration of digital innovations profiles. More than ten publications and reports have been elaborated. A new approach for effective delivery of executive trainings on accessibility at national level with the collaboration of UN resident teams has been piloted in two countries and will be further replicated across the Europe region. Collaboration with the European Commission and the Regional Cooperation Council has been strengthened to advance the digital integration of Western Balkans.

#### 2.10 The 7th ITU World Telecommunication Development Conference 2017 (WTDC-17), held from 9 to 20 October 2017 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, under the theme of ““ICT for Sustainable Development Goals” (ICT④SDGs), adopted the Buenos Aires Declaration, the contribution of the ITU-D to the ITU Strategic Plan and the Buenos Aires Action Plan (BaAP), including five regional initiatives per region for all six regions.

## 3 Contribution to other Sectors and the General Secretariat

3.1 Regional and area offices contributed to the implementation of strategic and operational plans of ITU-R, ITU-T, and the General Secretariat as follows:

#### 3.2 ITU-R

3.2.1 With the objective of informing and assisting the ITU membership on radiocommunication-related matters, in particular developing countries, BDT and BR continued to organize spectrum-related workshops, seminars, meetings, and capacity-building activities, with the support of the Regional Offices and in cooperation with the relevant international organizations and national authorities. In that direction, during 2017 the following events were organized, among others:

* Four Regional Radio Seminars (RRS) in Nairobi (Kenya), Lima (Peru), Phnom Penh (Cambodia) and Muscat (Oman); these 4 seminars gathered more than 450 participants coming from 80 countries of those regions.
* Two ITU Frequency Coordination Meeting on the use of the VHF band (174-216 MHz) and UHF band (470-806 MHz) in Managua, Nicaragua (8-10 March) and Guatemala City, Guatemala (28 August-1 September), respectively.
* Two International Satellite Symposia in Bariloche, Argentina (29-31 May) and Bangkok, Thailand (30 August-1 September), respectively.
* 2nd ITU/WMO Seminar “Use of Radio Spectrum for Meteorology: Weather, Water and Climate Monitoring and Prediction”, in Geneva, Switzerland on 23-24 October.
* 5th Latin-American Telecommunication Congress, Cartagena, Colombia, 20-23 June.
* 7th International Spectrum Congress and ITU Workshop of frequency coordination in Bogota, Colombia, 5-8 September.

3.2.2 Those events fostered human capacity building on the use of the radio-frequency spectrum and the satellite orbits, as well as the application of the provisions of the ITU Radio Regulations.

3.2.3 In addition, direct assistance was provided (upon demand) to several countries, including Bhutan, Thailand, Cambodia, Senegal, El Salvador, and Peru to support their national spectrum management activities, long-term frequency management for mobile broadband, as well as transition to digital broadcasting and the allocation of the digital dividend.

#### 3.3 ITU-T

3.3.1 Regional Groups within ITU-T Study Groups have proven effective mechanisms to assist in bridging the standardization gap by stimulating effective participation in ITU-T Study Groups and increasing the number and quality of contributions from developing countries that could eventually lead to standards. ITU-T has 23 regional groups, of which eight for Africa, four for the Americas, five for the Arab States region, two for Asia and Oceania, and three for the Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Transcaucasia (EECAT) are active.

3.3.2 Under the Bridging the Standardization Gap (BSG), there were four Standardization Forums held for developing countries in 2017, which covered a wide range of themes, including operational aspects, economic and policy issues, IoT, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity, etc., as well as tutorials on the ITU-T working methods.

3.3.3 BDT and TSB have been jointly organizing Regional Economic and Financial Forums held back-to-back with SG3 Regional Groups since the 1990s. Every year, four such joint meetings are held in the four regions of Africa, Asia-Oceania, Arab States, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

3.3.4 The successful hands-on capacity-building training conducted by ITU-T SG3 since early 2014 has been extended to other study groups and their regional groups (3 sessions in the regions and 7 in Geneva in 2017). These BSG Hands-On sessions were geared towards assisting developing countries in acquiring the right skills and capabilities for international standards-making and drafting contributions for meetings. The sessions focused on the development of practical skills to maximize the effectiveness of developing countries’ participation in the ITU-T standardization process, covering topics, such as strategies for participation in Study Groups, drafting contributions, presenting proposals, collaborative working methods, and means of gaining support and building consensus.

3.3.5 In order to ensure continued and enhanced coordination between the regional offices and the work of ITU-T, a schedule of regular conference calls has been put into place between the Directors of the Regional offices, the TSB Director, and his senior management. In addition, each of the eleven ITU-T SG executive meeting reports, including participation from each region, are shared with the Directors of the Regional offices.

### 3.4 General Secretariat

3.4.1 With the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which acknowledges the important role of ICTs as a critical enabler for advancing the globally agreed sustainable development goals (SDGs), cooperation between the ITU regional and area offices with relevant regional and other international organizations dealing with development and financial matters will continue to be enhanced. Levering ITU membership in the UN development system, and as a financial contributor to the UN Resident Coordinator system, to ensure that the enabling ICT dimension is adequately reflected in United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFS) and equivalent documents as well as in poverty reduction strategies will be strengthened.

3.4.2 Council-16 resolved to use the WSIS framework as the foundation through which ITU helps to achieve the 2030 Agenda, within ITU’s mandate and within the allocated resources in the financial plan and biennial budget, noting the WSIS-SDG Matrix developed by UN Agencies. With the aim of strengthening the implementation of the WSIS Outcomes at the regional level, ITU regional and area offices, are encouraged to continue to coordinate and collaborate at the regional level (with the assistance of the WSIS Team) with the UN regional economic commissions and UN Regional Development Group, as well as all UN agencies (in particular those acting as facilitator for WSIS Action Lines), other relevant regional organizations, especially in the field of telecommunication/ICT, with the aim of aligning WSIS and SDG processes and their implementation as requested by UNGA Resolution 70/125, developing partnerships for implementation of inter-agency and multistakeholder projects, advancing implementation of WSIS Action Lines and advancing achievement of SDGs and strengthening regional input to the WSIS Forum, WSIS Prizes and WSIS Stocktaking.

## 4 Structure and staffing level

4.1 Annexes 5 and 6 of [Document C18/INF/6](https://www.itu.int/md/S18-CL-INF-0006/en) provide the breakdown of the staffing level as of end 2017 for the regional and area offices by grade, region, and office. The BDT structure continues to provide a sound basis for a horizontal relationship between headquarters and the field for the delivery of projects. The structures as well as the staffing level of the various regional and area offices take into consideration the recommendations of the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit on ways to improve the ITU regional presence as well as the need to better respond to membership expectations.

4.2 The Regional Directors report directly to the BDT Director. They are members of the BDT Management Committee (ManCom) and therefore participate directly in the discussions on key strategy and policy issues affecting BDT operations, including budget preparation and resource allocation.

4.3 The capacity of regional and area offices in specific areas of expertise continues to be strengthened through the recruitment of associate technical experts and support staff under regional initiatives and projects, drawing on networks of highly specialized experts.

4.4 Efforts are also underway to encourage Member States to consider seconding experts to the ITU regional and area offices, including through participation in the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) and United Nations Volunteer (UNV) programmes.

## 5 Support activities towards empowering regional and area offices

5.1 As indicated in document C17/25 submitted to Council 2017, the Cash Management and Financial Guidelines for ITUs Regional/Area Offices have been developed and transmitted to Regional/Area Offices in response to internal auditor’s recommendation.

5.2 Regional Directors continue to have a greater delegation of authority covering not only projects but also the implementation of the operational plan and regional initiatives, i.e.:

* signature of projects and cooperation agreements which have a budget of up to USD 150,000,
* ad hoc assistance for new actions, and
* operational plan for budget allocation and management.

5.3 A number of processes have been improved, automated, and made accessible for regional and area offices through a dedicated web portal, including the recruitment of experts, travel requests, requests for commitment of expenditure (SRM), the action/operational plan system (planning, monitoring, follow-up), supplier relationship management and events coordination.

5.4 Access to working methods has been further improved, including through tools for actions/project planning, monitoring and reporting, as well as the operational plan system (OPS). A large effort was placed on minimizing the IT related costs for all six Regional Preparatory Meetings. For these meetings, operational and infrastructure requirements was re-assessed to drastically reduce equipment shipped and BDT IT Support was conducted remotely from Headquarters in Geneva.

5.5 Significant improvements have been made with respect to connectivity and IT equipment for the Regional and Area Offices. A new BDT approved specification for IT equipment and their life-cycle took effect in 2017, prioritizing the requirements of field offices whilst still benefiting all of BDT. Following the scheduled end-of-life deadline of certain connectivity equipment in the Regional Offices, new equipment was procured and installed in 2017, replacing several systems in all the Regional Offices. This equipment maximizes the efficiency of data flow, expands the VOIP connectivity between Regional Offices and improves the service availability in the Addis Office. BDT has continued piloting its proof-of-concept with the conference terminals manufacturer, to expand the use of its existing internal video conferencing solution with external users without compromising security nor efficiency. This new feature will be procured and installed in ITU headquarters in 2018.

5.6 The regional and area offices are duly informed about all circular letters and correspondence regarding their respective regions sent by the secretariat in order to ensure proper follow-up as necessary.

1. The financial figures for 2017 are preliminary awaiting the final closure of accounts. Implementation figures refer to funds committed for the implementation of actions/projects. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)