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| **Agenda item: ADM 21** | **Document C19/25-E** |
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| Report by the Secretary-General |
| STRENGTHENING THE REGIONAL PRESENCE |

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| SummaryThe purpose of this document is to report on the implementation of Resolution 25 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference. [Document C19/INF/7](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-INF-0007/en) contains nine annexes in relation to this document (Annexes 1 to 9). Action requiredThe Council is invited to **note** this report.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_References[*Resolution 25 (Rev. Dubai, 2018)*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-025-E.pdf)*; Council documents* [*C17/INF/12*](http://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-INF-0012/en)*,* [*C19/INF/7*](http://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-INF-0007/en) |

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# 1 Background

1.1 Resolution 25 (Strengthening the regional presence) was revised by the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference 2018 (PP-18) held in Dubai. At this conference, ITU membership resolved “to strengthen the functions of the regional offices so that they can play a part in the implementation of ITU strategic plan, programmes and projects, and the regional initiatives set out in Resolution 17 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of WTDC”.

1.2 Efforts continued during 2018 towards enhancing 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 2018 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 C19/INF/7](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-INF-0007/en) that contains the following annexes:

* Annex 1 Key achievements by region for 2018
* Annex 2 Contribution to other Sectors and the General Secretariat
* Annex 3 Support activities towards empowering regional and area offices
* Annex 4 Summary of the 2018 operational plan and projects implementation level and summary of the 2018 regional and area offices expenditure
* Annex 5 2018 operational plan implementation level by region and objective
* Annex 6 Breakdown of the 2018 regional and area offices expenditure by category of expenditure
* Annex 7 2018 Fellowships awarded and recruited experts
* Annex 8 Summary of staffing level by regional and area offices
* Annex 9 Breakdown of staffing level by regional and area offices

**2 ITU regional presence satisfaction survey and overall review**

2.1 In addition, Resolution 25 requests 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”.

2.2 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](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-C-0025/en) (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.

2.3 Revised Resolution 25 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) instructed the Secretary-General to conduct an overall review on ITU regional presence and to report to Council 2020, including suggesting appropriate measures to ensure the continued effectiveness and efficiency of the ITU’s regional presence. The elements to be covered by the review, among others, were contained in Annex to Resolution 25 (Rev. Dubai, 2018). ITU intends to conduct such review of the organization’s regional presence, in accordance to the requirements and provisions of Resolution 25 (Rev. Dubai, 2018). **Appendix** to this document provides further details on the purpose, requirements and deliverables of the planned review of ITU’s regional presence.

2.4 The 2019 meeting of the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG-19) took place from 3 to 5 April at ITU headquarters in Geneva. The meeting had a broad agenda as it marked the first TDAG meeting after the PP-18. The topics of regional presence and implementation of regional initiatives were widely discussed. Breakout sessions were organized during TDAG to foster fruitful discussions and exchanges of views and positions. The outcomes of these sessions included suggestions on ways the regional and area offices can better respond to the needs of the members, represent the ITU as a whole, and leverage ITU’s membership in the wider UN family by working with UN Resident Coordinators. The need to ensure that regional and area offices possess the right skill sets in order to be able to provide direct assistance to members was also stressed. Bringing the work of the study groups closed to the countries was also noted. Roles and relationships of sectors and regional/area offices should be further clarified to strengthen collaboration and synergies. Breakout sessions also emphasized the need to comply with JIU recommendations.

**3 Establishment of an ITU area office for South Asia and criteria for the creation of ITU field offices**

3.1 The final session of ITU Council 2018 agreed to the establishment of the ITU area office for South Asia in India. The Council invited the Secretary-General to start negotiations of a host country agreement, including the financial arrangements. Further to this decision of the Council, the secretariat has prepared a draft host country agreement and shared it with the Government of India for its comments and feedback. The draft host country agreement covers such topics as the purposes and sphere of activity of the area office, obligations of the host government, financial modalities, privileges and immunities, security and safety, and others.

3.2 Furthermore, ITU Council 2018 requested the secretariat to “suggest clear criteria for the creation of an area office for consideration by a next session of the Council”. Following this decision, the secretariat has prepared draft criteria for the creation of ITU field offices for submission to Council 2019 (document [C19/32](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-C-0032/en)).

### 4 Achievements at regional level during 2018 (operational plan, regional initiatives, and projects)

4.1 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>

4.2 The 2018 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 2018. The performance report can be found at the following address: <https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG24-C-0002/en>.

4.3 In 2018, the implementation of the BDT operational plan (regular budget) included 186 actions for a total implementation level of 2.6 million CHF (Table 1). The implementation level of technical cooperation projects amounted to 3.9 million USD for 44 projects (Table 2).[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Table 1. Implementation of BDT operational plan in 2018**

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

 

**Table 2. Implementation of projects in 2018**

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

 

4.4 It is recalled that ITU Council decided in 2018 to allocate resources for the funding of projects to implement the WTDC-17 regional initiatives. An amount of 2 million CHF was approved for the period of 2018-2019 and another 3 million CHF was included in the Financial Plan 2020-2023 for the 2020-2021 period. These funds were allocated to act as seed funds used to attract funds from partners. As an initial step towards the implementation of the regional initiatives approved by WTDC-17, ten new projects from all regions were under development by the end of 2018 for implementation from 2019. Regional initiatives are intended to address specific telecommunication/ICT priority areas and are implemented through partnerships and resource mobilization. Under each regional initiative, projects are developed and implemented to meet specific region’s needs. During the 2019 TDAG, informal sessions were organized for each region to discuss the regional initiatives and their implementation. The BDT Director is making all efforts to ensure that the initiatives are well coordinated with the programmes, study groups and the work of the other sectors in order to avoid fragmentation, and maximize impact and results.

4.5Regional and area offices contributed to the implementation of ITU strategic plan and ITU-D operational plans. The summary of key achievements is provided by region in **Annex 1**.

**5 Contribution to other Sectors and the General Secretariat**

Regional and area offices contributed to the implementation of ITU strategic plan and ITU-R, ITU-T and the General Secretariat operational plans as described in **Annex 2**.

**6 Structure and staffing level**

6.1 Annexes 8 and 9 of [Document C19/INF/7](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-INF-0007/en) provide the breakdown of the staffing level as of end 2018 for the regional and area offices by grade, region, and office. 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. Council 2018 approved the upgrade of the Area Office for CIS countries to ITU Regional Office for the CIS Region and the creation of the D1 post of Regional Director. The D1 post has been advertised for competitive recruitment. The selection is ongoing.

6.2 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. The recruitment of junior professional officers (JPOs) is currently under study.

**7 Support activities towards empowering regional and area offices**

The support activities implemented during 2018 to empower regional and area offices are described in **Annex 3**.

APPENDIX

Review of ITU’s Regional Presence – Terms of Reference

## Purpose:

ITU intends to conduct a review of the organization’s regional presence, in accordance to the requirements and provisions of Resolution 25 (Rev. Dubai, 2018).

From this perspective it is crucial to assess whether the organization and functioning of field offices is contributing substantively towards bringing ITU institutional activities closer to its membership.

The goal of this review is to develop and implement an action plan that will allow:

1. to be able to measure the performance of a Regional Office (RO) under the new set of rules;
2. to develop an effective Risk Management (ERM) process, including the risk assessment (RA) of the activities carried out at the RO level;
3. to develop instruments that facilitate effective coordination between Headquarters and ROs;
4. to ensure that the ROs comply with the rules and procedures issued by Headquarters relating to financial management, projects and procurement.

The review should take into consideration of the following elements:

1. the extent of fulfilment of the provisions of Resolution 25 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) by the Telecommunication Development Bureau, the General Secretariat, and the other two Bureaux, as appropriate;
2. how further decentralization could ensure greater efficiency at lower cost, taking into consideration accountability and transparency;
3. the result of past surveys of the level of satisfaction of Member States, Sector Members, and regional telecommunication/ICT organizations with ITU’s regional presence;
4. assistance for developing countries to participate in ITU activities;
5. the extent of possible duplication between the functions of ITU headquarters and the regional offices;
6. the extent of fulfilment of the provisions of Resolution 17 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference;
7. the degree of autonomy in decision-making currently accorded to regional offices, and whether greater autonomy could enhance their efficiency and effectiveness;
8. the effectiveness of collaboration and coordination between the ITU regional offices, regional telecommunication/ICT organizations and other regional and international development and financial organizations;
9. how regional presence and the organization of activities in the regions can enhance the effective participation of all countries in ITU work;
10. the resources currently made available to the regional offices for reducing the digital divide;
11. the optimal overall structure of the ITU regional presence, including the location and number of regional and area offices.

## Functional requirements:

1. Analyse the purpose and role of ITU’s regional presence in contributing to the implementation of the ITU Strategic Plan 2020-2023;
2. Analyse how “fit for purpose” is ITU’s regional presence to implement WTDCs Plans of Action;
3. Pursuant to Res. 25 (Dubai, 2018), analyse how the regional presence will implement the regional activities of the whole of the ITU, including BR, TSB and the General Secretariat;
4. Analyse the role of the Regional Offices/presence within the UN development system and the industry ecosystem, at a national and regional level;
5. Assist the ITU management team to (re)define the role, structure and objectives for ITU’s regional presence;
6. Assess the engagement of ITU’s regional presence with the different partners in the ICT ecosystem in order to facilitate discussions on regional matters;
7. Assess the role of regional presence in strengthening ITU’s role as an executing agency for implementing projects (in alignment with PP Res.135 on providing technical assistance and implementing projects);
8. Review the support provided by the Regional Offices in the regional preparatory processes for major ITU conferences, including PP, WTSA, WTDC, WRC, and the support of Regional Offices for the major global ITU events taking place in the respective regions;
9. Review the role of regional offices in supporting Regional Study Groups (following related WTSA and WTDC Resolutions);
10. Review internal administrative procedures pertaining to the work of the regional offices, with a view to their simplification and transparency and enhancing work efficiency (with a focus on procedure for ex ante and ex post regulation), including:
	1. Analysing the internal communication of the Regional Offices/presence with Headquarters and in particular BDT, TSB, BR and the General Secretariat;
	2. Assessing mechanisms to strengthen the expertise in the regional offices, including whether the mobility policy can be applied in ITU;
	3. Examining the financial management and the procurement activities carried out in the Regional and Area Offices;
11. Undertake all necessary activities to conduct the review and consult with all stakeholders, including:
	1. Preparing samples questionnaires/interviewing guidelines;
	2. Preparing the communication plan and communication initiative in the organization itself;
	3. Data collection, interviewing and consultation of representatives of all ITU stakeholders, including representatives of Member States, ITU Sector members and ITU staff;
	4. Data processing, analysis and development of reports;
	5. Presenting the conclusions of the study and propose appropriate measures to ensure the continued effectiveness and efficiency of the ITU regional presence;
12. Propose a plan of action for the implementation of the proposed measures.

## Deliverables

The project should produce the following deliverables:

1. Profile the current structure of regional offices/presence, including procedures and performance indicators to conduct a gap analysis (which will consider resources, skills, tools);
2. Existing level of organizational efficacy/performance parameters;
3. Profile of desirable structure of the regional offices/presence, including managerial objectives serving the strategic direction of the organization and staff skills required to implement those objectives;
4. Managerial objectives of improving organizational performance (including people/skills, processes technology and tools);
5. Develop / extend the RBM model for regional presence/offices;
6. Action Plan for change.

1. Implementation level = Actual expenditure figures after 2018 accounting closure [↑](#footnote-ref-1)